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# HUMAN NATURE

*By*

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## INTRODUCTION

THE importance of leadership education in the church is universally acknowledged. The rapid developments in general education, the influence exerted by these developments upon Christian education, and the production of new types of courses for church schools and church societies are making greater demands upon church workers. These cannot be fully met without at least a measure of preparation on the part of all who are responsible for carrying on the various activities of the local congregation and its auxiliary organizations. This need of more adequate leadership preparation has been felt not only by the leaders of the church at large but also by the local church workers themselves. There is evident everywhere an earnest desire for a program of leadership education which will help present and prospective congregational leaders to equip themselves for more effective service.

The United Lutheran Church in America, through its Parish and Church School Board, has for many years been aware of this need of its constituency and has planned a series of texts to help meet the requirements of the present educational situation in the church. This series of texts is known as *The Lutheran Leadership Course*.

The Board has recognized the fact that some church workers have had more educational advantages and fuller leadership experiences than others. Accordingly it has planned courses on two levels—a more elementary series and a somewhat more advanced series. The present volume is a text in the more advanced series.

This text is intended to provide the basic material for a course entitled "A Study of Christian Growth." Many factors enter into effective church work; for example, knowledge of the Word of God, understanding of Christian faith, appreciation of the work of the church, skill in dealing with people, knowledge of effective methods of teaching, and ability to measure progress. All are highly important, and each will receive treatment at some point in *The Lutheran Leadership Course*. The present text deals with only one factor: The Christian leader's understanding of the

persons with whom and for whom he is working. It is a practical book on human nature, intended primarily to be of practical help to leaders in their practical church work. It is not a psychology, though psychological subjects have been treated in so far as they were found to be essential to the Christian leader's understanding of his group. Their treatment, however, has been held to what was considered absolutely essential, and, in so far as possible, technical terms have been studiously avoided.

A word should be said with reference to the books suggested for further study. Among the large number of books dealing with psychological subjects a choice had to be made. In general, only books which are consonant with Christian positions are suggested. Occasionally, however, a book is included which the authors recognize as being somewhat out of harmony with the fundamental conceptions of the church, the reason for its inclusion being that these books supply much needed material of a quite accurate kind in spite of the fact that their basic philosophy is at variance with Christian beliefs. Readers of this text and teachers of courses will use discrimination as they consult suggested books.

It is required that persons taking this course for credit devote to its study a minimum of ten fifty-minute periods in class sessions and an equal amount of time in home preparation. Further details on requirements will be found in *The Lutheran Leadership Course Bulletin*.

The authors of the text are members of the editorial staff of the Parish and Church School Board. Miss Locker is well known as the writer of the Junior texts of *The Christian Life Course* and of *The Augsburg International Uniform Lessons*, as the assistant editor responsible for the Children's Division of "The Parish School" magazine, and as a lecturer on many phases of educational theory and practice. Mr. Hoh has prepared parts of *The Christian Life Course* and has collaborated in the preparation of several texts in *The Lutheran Leadership Course*.

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## CHAPTER I

# OURSELVES

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter you will find a few stories taken from life, and also some important matters concerning human nature. As you read, look for four things:

1. Something which makes you think of the church group with which you are working or of which you are a member;
2. At least one good reason why you should know as much as possible about the members of your group;
3. Several ways in which you can learn to know more about the members of your group;
4. A good reason why you should study this book thoroughly.

Every week, in thousands of congregations, a great variety of public meetings are held—worship services, school sessions, study groups, society meetings, and other gatherings. In each of these there are persons who may be described as leaders, and others who may be termed followers. Many of these meetings are highly effective; that is, things run smoothly and real results are attained. Not infrequently, however, they are not so effective; problems and difficulties arise which appear very perplexing and disconcerting. The major responsibility for solving the problems and overcoming the difficulties rests undoubtedly with the leaders. In order to meet their responsibility, leaders must understand why things do not run smoothly, why problems and difficulties arise, why results are not achieved. Ineffectiveness may be due to one or more of many different reasons. For example, the general surroundings may be to blame; or, the fault may be in the nature of the program; or, the members of the group may be at fault. Whatever the reason, it is the leader's task to discover the difficulty and to endeavor to overcome it.

Some of the difficulties are due to a lack of understanding of human nature. If leaders knew people better and understood more thoroughly their nature—how they develop, how they feel, how they think, how they learn, and why they act as they do—many of their problems would be solved.

## Typical Pictures

1. *Church School Teachers Discuss Their Pupils.* The teachers of Trinity Church were discussing some of their problems.

"I certainly feel discouraged," spoke out Miss Adams, the superintendent of the Beginners' department. "Sometimes I wonder whether it's even possible to teach religion to little children. Last week Marion Tyson's mother came to me and said that Marion insisted on calling the old man with white whiskers who lives next door to them 'God.' And little Billy Green asked his mother why everyone wants to 'shake Jesus' at the end of prayers. At first Mrs. Green did not know what Billy meant; but suddenly it dawned on her that he was referring to the closing words of the prayers he heard—'for Jesus' sake.' How can you do anything with children like that?"

"You should be glad you are not teaching boys around sixteen and seventeen," chimed in Mr. Arnold. "My lesson is constantly being interrupted by all sorts of queer questions. Today, for example, Jack Johnson wanted to know—and, mind you, after all my teaching—whether there really is a God. Imagine that! Of course, I got the class back to the lesson, but it is annoying when they insist on interjecting questions, especially when they have so little to do with the topic."

"Well, I don't have that problem," said Mrs. Nelson, who was also a teacher in the Senior department. "Why, I'd be surprised if my girls would ask questions. All they talk about is clothes, and parties, and boys. And when I do get them quieted down for the lesson, they just sit and stare into space. Everything I say seems to go in one ear and out the other."

And so the problems were discussed. The teachers of the Juniors complained because the children were "so active," and "always wanted to be doing something," and "would not study their memory work." The Primary department teachers wondered why their children were "so restless during worship" and "why the big boys were always teasing the little ones." At last the pastor's wife, who was the teacher of the Women's Bible Class, spoke up, with a little laugh:

"I have my difficulties, too; for adults are not always easy to teach. But I have been wondering whether it would not be interesting to try to find out why people act as they do. Perhaps if we understood our pupils better, we could not only solve some of our problems, but also be better prepared to bring our pupils into a vital relationship with God through our Saviour."

"That's an idea!" exclaimed the superintendent. "I believe it would help us. How about making this the subject of our next discussion? Wouldn't it be a good idea for each of us to think of some definite ways in which we might learn to know our pupils better? What do you think?"

2. *The Young People Reveal Some Problems.* It was almost time for the Young People's meeting to begin.

"Doris Kingsley, what are you thinking about? I have spoken to you twice, and you just keep staring at that wall."

Doris turned and smiled at her friend.

"I'm sorry, Madge; I didn't hear you. I *was* thinking. I wonder why we have to meet in such a dismal room. Just look at that wall; it's all streaked from the rain. I wonder when it was last painted. And this rug is threadbare, and the chairs and the table look as though they came out of the ark."

"Well, my dear, perhaps they are antiques," interrupted Madge laughingly.

"Don't joke, Madge; I'm in earnest. Just look around this room; do you see anything very attractive about it?"

"No, to tell the truth, I don't," answered Madge. "But I guess we can't do anything. Come help me select the hymns; I have charge of the devotions."

"Well, perhaps the looks of a room have nothing to do with a religious meeting, but I do like pretty things," murmured Doris, as she picked up a hymn book.

"Hello, girls; I'll have two people to speak to, anyway!" called Jack as he joined the girls in the back of the room. "Or, perhaps I'd better say 'read to'; for that's what I'm going to do. I just received the topic book this afternoon."

"There's no use trying to do anything else," said Stanley, who had come in right after Jack. "Don't you remember the last time I led the meeting? I tried to follow the program as suggested in the book, and we just got started in a lively discussion when Mr. Snyder took the floor. You know how he is; he settles every question. There isn't much use in our trying to think. The next time I won't waste so much time in preparation."

"Come on, I guess we had better begin," said Madge. "We have the faithful half-dozen here, and I guess no one else will come."

"Well, why don't they come?" asked Doris in a low, insistent voice. "I think we ought to do something about it."

"But what is there to do?" said Stanley. "There's something wrong somewhere, but I haven't any idea what it might be. I feel like quitting."

"No, we're not going to give up," replied Doris, with her characteristic determination. "There's some way out of this, and I'm going to find out what it is."

"Good luck to you, my dear"—this from Madge—"and we'll be with you when you've got a line on the problem."

3. *Missionary Women Talk about Themselves.* Mrs. Drake answered the knock at her door.

"Come in, Mrs. Stevens, I am glad to see you," said Mrs. Drake, as she led the president of the missionary society to a comfortable chair in the living room. "I was going to call you on the telephone and ask you some questions about the next missionary meeting—you know that I am to lead the meeting this month—but the meeting isn't until next Thursday, so there is plenty of time to discuss that. Have you read the book of the month yet? I sat up half the night finishing it. We are going to discuss it at our literary club tomorrow."

Mrs. Stevens took the book which her friend handed her and glanced through it.

"It does look interesting," she said. "I should like to read it, sometime." Then with a smile she continued, "I, too, was awake late last night; but I was not reading a book. I was thinking about our missionary meetings. I wish that we could make them more helpful and that we could develop a more sincere evangelistic spirit among our members. That is why I am here today; I want your suggestions."

"Well, let's see," hesitated the hostess. "I could look over the material tomorrow evening and give out the clippings on Sunday, so that the women would have time to think over what they are going to read. I felt sorry for Miss Grim last month; she is not a very good reader and she happened to get a clipping with a number of strange words which she could not pronounce. If she hadn't become so embarrassed, I am sure she could have done better."

"Yes, I felt sorry for her, too," agreed Mrs. Stevens. "It would help, to give the clippings out earlier; but I wish that we could have discussions. Don't you think you might assign definite topics to different members and ask them to speak on them?"

"Oh, our women won't speak in the meeting," exclaimed Mrs. Drake. "You know how difficult it is even to get leaders. Why, I wouldn't lead myself, if I had to speak; it's all right when all you have to do is to read what's in the missionary magazine; but—"

"What do you do at your literary club—read clippings?" asked the president.

"No, indeed; we assign topics or a book, and we all go prepared to talk." Mrs. Drake came to a sudden stop. "Well, I never thought of that before," she said after a pause.

"What?" asked her guest quietly.

"Why, there are Miss Jackson, and Mrs. Hall, and Mrs. Thome, and the Gilbert sisters; they all belong to our literary club and they all take an active part in the discussions; but in the missionary society—never a word from any of them. I wonder why."

"I have often wondered myself. Why do women—and men, too, for that matter—who lead discussions and carry on interesting conversations on all sorts of topics when they are at club meetings, or at socials, or in their homes—why do they find it hard to enter into discussions in church meetings?"

"I have an idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Drake cheerfully. "Tomorrow, be my guest at the club—it's to meet at my sister's home—and after the meeting we will get our missionary women together and ask them the question: Why can you talk in one meeting and not in another? I believe we shall find some reasons, and perhaps awaken some new enthusiasm for our meetings."

"Thank you, I shall be glad to accept," answered the president. "I feel more hopeful already about our meetings"—and Mrs. Stevens rose to go.

## Human Nature

In each of these, the fundamental difficulties which the various church workers experienced were in some way or another con-

nected with human nature. Their problems arose, partly at least, because they had an insufficient knowledge and understanding of the nature of those with whom and for whom they were working. Some of these church leaders sensed this themselves. They had a feeling that if they knew more about people and about the underlying reasons for people's attitudes and actions, some of their problems would be solved. And they were entirely correct. They were correct because it is a fact that knowledge of human nature is essential to any sort of effective work with people. Jesus knew human nature and he made use of his knowledge whenever he dealt with people.

There are persons who hold that human nature is what it is, and that there is nothing that can be done about it. There is the man with a hot temper who excuses himself by saying, "I'm sorry, but it's my nature, you know." There is the woman who, as she shuns her foreign-born neighbor, says with a shrug of her shoulders, "There are some people I just can't stand. I guess I was born that way." In so many cases, people excuse themselves or others with a remark that has about it a note of finality: "Well, here it is; it's human nature; we can't do anything about it; so we might as well take it as it is." Is this view correct? Must we take and leave human nature as we find it? Are persons so bound up with their heredity and their environment that there is no possibility of change? If so, then our churches and our church schools might well be closed; our preachers and teachers, give up their efforts; our missionaries, be recalled; our whole religious program, be abandoned. Then, too, Christ died in vain. If human nature cannot be changed, then to what purpose are Christian evangelism and Christian education?

But human nature can be changed. In fact, it has been changed in millions of lives. People have been led to desire things which they did not naturally desire, to be interested in things in which they were not naturally interested, to devote themselves to causes to which purely natural devotion would never have led them. The whole history of the Christian Church through the ages is proof of the fact that human nature can be changed; that people can be made over through the power of God's Spirit; that Simons can be changed into Peters, and Sauls into Pauls.

Here, then, is a valid reason for studying human nature: People can be changed; they can be built up into Christlike personalities; they can be built as "living stones" into the temple of the living God. Pastors, teachers, leaders of church societies, and personal workers can lead human lives closer to God, so that his Spirit can mold them for a place in his kingdom. This is one of the miracles of life—that persons working with God can help develop Christian character and Christian conduct. There is a challenge here, a challenge to co-operate with God in the fashioning of persons who will live a Godward life.

But human nature, if it is to be influenced and changed, must be understood. Its understanding is the essential basis for sympathetic and successful co-operative work.

What, then, is this thing, called "human nature"? It is ourselves—ourselves as we were born, as we have grown, as we naturally are. It is ourselves with all our natural faculties and faults, with all our inherited capacities and limitations, with all our inborn strengths and weaknesses, with all our native goodness and native sin.

Philosophers and theologians, psychologists and sociologists have delved deeply into the study of human nature to ascertain its meaning. Learned treatises and monumental volumes have been written on it. Almost innumerable theories as to its nature have been put forth. Battles have been waged over it by conflicting schools of thought. Knowledge of all these is both highly interesting and valuable. In this course, however, our purpose shall be to discuss those facts about human nature which will be most helpful to church leaders and church workers in their practical dealings with the members of the groups with whom and for whom they are working. In other words, we shall endeavor to find out why people think, and feel, and act as they do, in order that we may help them to think, and feel, and act as they should.

### Ways of Studying Human Nature

If church workers are to solve the practical problems which arise in the course of their work with others and if they are to make the contribution to the lives of others which they ought to make as leaders and guides of those lives, it follows from

what has been said that they must know and understand the fundamental facts about human nature. But how shall this knowledge and understanding be acquired? How can human nature be studied? There are several possible ways:

1. *Through a Study of Oneself.* A great Greek philosopher had as his cardinal principle this motto: "Know thyself." Certainly it is true that one approach to an understanding of others is through an understanding of oneself. If one faces his own life frankly and endeavors to discover why he thinks, and feels, and acts as he does, then surely this must yield some insight into the lives of others.

There are many things about human nature which can be learned through self-examination. Teachers of children who can recall the experiences and impressions of their own childhood will know how to create happy experiences for their boys and girls and also how to avoid making impressions which are harmful—untrue, fear-provoking, revolting, painful. Leaders of adolescents who can recall what they went through during those years between childhood and manhood or womanhood will be better able to understand the struggles which are taking place in the young folks whom they are called upon to guide. Church workers who realize the joy of inner communion with God, and who understand how their own thoughts and feelings have been produced, how their own ideals have been built up, how their own conduct is shaped, will be better able to lead men and women to the God whom they love and to help those men and women mold their character and life. A study of one's own past and of oneself in the present is a valuable way of learning to understand human nature.

But there are dangers in this method; self-study needs to be carefully guarded. In the first place, there is the danger of morbidity; too much study of oneself may become depressing. Then, there is the danger of Pharisaism—the danger of thinking more highly of oneself than one ought to think. Both of these are harmful to the student's own character. Further, there is the danger of accepting one's own experiences as typical of those of others. No two persons are quite alike. Allowances must be made for differences. There is, too, the danger of not recalling one's own experiences accurately, of reading later thoughts and impressions into one's childhood and adolescent experiences, of

misinterpreting one's own experiences entirely. In spite of these very definite dangers, however, there is genuine value in studying oneself—if it is done with care and caution.

2. *Through Friendship.* It has been said that we never know a person until we have lived with him. Frequent personal contacts reveal traits, good and bad, which occasional meetings would never bring to light. Perhaps the reason why some people seem to us to be stupid, or lazy, or selfish, or bad, is because we do not know them. Unless we can share the experiences of others, either actually or through our imaginations, we cannot understand them. This is the reason why teachers and leaders have found it valuable to go camping with their groups, to attend summer schools and conferences together, to entertain them in their homes. A leader who lives thus intimately with his group, even though he is not definitely trying to study its members, cannot but learn much from his contacts with them. His very friendship with them and their friendship with him will reveal insights into human nature. Nothing can quite take the place of friendly fellowship with those whom one is trying to lead in Christian living.

When this personal relationship of the leader with the members of his group is permeated by a deep Christian love—a love that gives itself in unstinting devotion—then insight becomes even more revealing; for Christian love has power to penetrate beneath the surface and to see, with sympathetic understanding, the true inner nature of others. Indeed, it has power to see more than the true inner nature; it sees hidden possibilities in that nature—possibilities which, with the help of the Holy Spirit, can be made eternal realities. Christian love can see in every person a soul for which Christ died, a redeemed soul, a life which can be perfected and made into a spiritual life that will forever be in harmony and in fellowship with God. One way to know people, therefore, is to love them.

3. *Through Personal Observation.* Though the Christian leader will learn much from fellowship with those whom he is endeavoring to guide, there are times when he should go farther and definitely try to observe the motives, the thoughts, the attitudes, and the actions of the members of his group. He should train himself to note how pupils respond; how they act in different situations; what their interests, problems, and needs are; where



they like to go; what they like to do; why they make the choices they do—in short, everything about them. There are numberless details about human nature which can be learned by careful observation.

Nor need this observation be confined to the particular group with which the leader is especially concerned. Any group anywhere furnishes an opportunity for studied observation. All such observation will prove helpful to the church worker who is keenly interested in improving his knowledge of human nature. And all such knowledge will, in turn, prove helpful in carrying on the Christian work in which he is engaged.

Some Christian workers have found it helpful to keep individual records of the members of their group. This can be done by noting on simple charts the main reactions of people to the more important things of life. The purpose of such charts is gradually to acquire a working knowledge of the chief characteristics of each person with whom one is working. In the course of time such charts, if kept and studied together, furnish the basis for a growing understanding of human nature itself. (A chart form is found in the Appendix.) From a study of a dozen such charts, properly filled out, a Sunday school teacher ought to be able to get a fairly accurate picture of his class; a young people's leader, of his group; a brotherhood president, of the men of his organization; a pastor, of his catechetical class. Then, from this study, the leader will be able to select topics of vital importance to the group, to know what kind of materials to use, to see what points in a lesson to emphasize, to decide what activities to engage in with the group, and so forth.

4. *Through the Findings of Others.* Another way by which human nature can be studied is by making use of the findings of others. In reality this method is but an extension of the preceding method; it might be called "indirect observation." Thousands of students of human nature have made careful investigations, engaged in scientific research, studied minutely the human body, mind, and soul, and have then recorded their findings in articles, pamphlets, and books, or related them in lectures and addresses. Such findings are valuable and helpful, for they are often the observations of highly trained specialists. Their findings, added to our own, help us to see more clearly what human nature really is and what it is like.

5. *Through a Study of the Teachings of the Bible.* There is still another way in which much truth about human nature can be acquired: through a study of what the Bible reveals concerning man's inner life. Man's original goodness, his subsequent fall into sin, his consequent sinfulness, the hopelessness of his spiritual condition without divine salvation, the truth of his spiritual redemption and restoration, the fact of his regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit, the glorious possibility of his gradual sanctification and ultimate glorification—all these are learned from a study of the divine revelation recorded in the Bible. Accordingly, no understanding of human nature which does not take into account the teachings of God's Word can be regarded as complete. To all other ways of learning about human nature, this one must be added. Christian leaders will do well to ascertain what the Bible reveals with reference to man's nature.

To summarize: There are five important ways in which human nature can be studied: (1) through self-study; (2) through friendly fellowship; (3) through personal observation; (4) through the study of the recorded observations of others; and (5) through a study of the teachings of the Bible. Each of these is helpful. Taken together, they make possible a quite accurate way of discovering what people are like, how they grow, how they learn, and what they think and feel and do. Church workers who really desire to improve their effectiveness will want to make use of all these methods of learning about human nature.

The following suggestions are offered to assist leaders in making a beginning in the study of human nature. Select *one* suggestion and follow it.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR BEFORE THE NEXT SESSION

##### *Something in My Own Life Which Will Help Me Deal More Effectively with the Members of My Class or Group*

Think of the members of your class or group. How old are they? Then ask yourself: What was I like at that age? How did I look upon life? What were my main interests? What were my problems? How were these problems met by my parents and teachers? Did those who were responsible help me or did they fail? Why? Did they understand me? Did they try to understand me? How could

they have helped me more effectively? What mistakes did they make? Why? How could they have avoided making these? After you have thought these questions through, ask yourself: What can I learn from my own experience that will help me deal more effectively with the members of my class or group? Make a list of a few such things.

### *Something Which I Can Learn from Association with the Members of My Class or Group*

Endeavor to make some natural contact with at least a few members of your group—for example, by visiting in their homes, by having a party, by taking a hike, by playing with them. Make a list of a few things which you find out about them during your association with them—a few things that will help you to understand them better and to deal with them more effectively.

### *Something Which I Can Learn from Studied Observation of the Members of My Class or Group*

Watch carefully any one member of your class or group during your meeting. Make mental notes of: when he arrives; what he does; what he talks about; whether he has come prepared; what part he takes in the meeting; how he acts during worship, study, etc.; what his attitude is toward you and toward other members of the group. As soon as possible after the meeting write out your observations. Study your findings. Is there anything which will help you to deal more effectively with this person? Make a list of a few things of value which you have discovered.

### *Something Which I Can Learn from the Findings of Students of Human Nature*

Be on the alert for facts about human nature and for helpful suggestions on dealing with it. You will find them in magazines, books, lectures, radio talks, and elsewhere. Make a list of any articles which you may happen to read on the subject of human nature. Make a list of any books on this subject which you may have in your own library. If possible, make a list of books on this subject found in your public library. Note a few things which you have learned about human nature from your reading during the past few weeks.

### *Something about Human Nature Which I Can Learn from the Bible*

As you read the Bible take special note of anything which it may reveal to you concerning human nature.

## HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Gates, A. I. *Elementary Psychology*, 1929, pp. 1-32.

McLester, F. C. *Our Pupils and How They Learn*, 1930, pp. 11-22.

Mudge, E. L. *Our Pupils*, 1930, pp. 9-24.

Powell, W. E. *The Growth of Christian Personality*, 1929, pp. 9-21.

## CHAPTER II

### WE ARE BORN

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter you will find a few very important facts about the equipment which human beings bring with them at birth. A knowledge of these is essential to an understanding of human nature. As you read, try to find out:

1. Something about the bodily systems which sustain and promote life's activities;
2. Why a study of these systems is important for Christian leaders;
3. Something about the soul and its capacities;
4. What unseen forces seem to influence life;
5. What equipment for religious growth a person has at birth.

The mysteries of life, of growth, of development—have we thought of them sufficiently? Why did the Psalmist say: "I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made"?

Four-year-old Frank was looking at his new baby brother as he lay in his blue and white crib.

"Where did Baby Brother come from, Daddy?" Then, after a moment: "Was I once a little baby?"

"Yes, Sonny," came the answer, "everyone was once a little baby."

Frank turned and looked at his tall father from head to foot, and then asked, wonderingly, as he pointed to the baby,

"Were you once a tiny, wee baby like that?"

"Yes, Frankie Boy, I was once just as small and helpless as little Baby Brother."

Then, after another little pause, Frank said, almost in a whisper,

"But, Daddy, how did you ever get so big?"

Do we not, even though we are older and wiser than little Frank, wonder still, as we look into the face of a newborn babe, about the mysteries of life and growth? For, as the poet expresses it for us, the little babe seems

"Hardly a life at all,  
Only a something with hands and feet;  
Only a feeling that things are warm;  
Only a longing for something to eat."

—Grace MacDonald.

Yet we know that wrapped in this bundle of flesh are the mystery of the past, the awakening of the present, and the possibilities of the future.

The mystery of life deepens as we think of the baby before he is born. From the union of two tiny germ cells comes a speck of a body no larger than a pinhead, out of which grows the baby, the child, the youth, the man—man, of whom the Psalmist sang that he was created but “a little lower than the angels.” No machinery is so intricate as is the human body. Trillions upon trillions of tiny cells, all coming from the original cell, work together to build the body.

How wonderful the forming of every part! For example, two tiny tubes start forming, each in an opposite part of the body cavity, and then, at exactly the right time and in exactly the right place, they come together to form the heart. Or again, two groups of cells work separately until at just the right time they combine to form the eye with its socket. And so, in this wonderful way, all parts of the body develop their shape and place.

Not until the end of the second month does this growing form begin to resemble that of a human being. Between the fourth and fifth months it has so grown that it is able to assert itself to such an extent that the mother says with joy, “He is alive.” And so the baby grows until the time comes for him to open his eyes upon our big, wide world. Then he announces himself with a welcome little cry, which seems to say, “Here I am. What are you going to do with me?”

### What We Can Observe

What can we observe as we look at a newborn infant? First of all, we can see its physical form—head, trunk, limbs—and its main sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands. Then, we can see that it has power to feel, move, cry, and take food. Further, we can recognize certain racial characteristics—shape of head, facial features, color of skin. Perhaps we may be able to notice some family resemblances. All these things are inherited.

Somewhat closer observation reveals some additional facts. We can tell that babies are not by any means alike, though they have many general characteristics in common. For example,

there are differences in size, in weight, in sex, and in ways of reacting to persons and things around them. In other words, we can note a degree of individuality even at the outset of life. In creating these differences, heredity again has played its part.

From our observations we realize that beneath the surface of these outward things which we ourselves can easily see, there must be an intricate system or group of systems which make possible this life in the newborn babe. What is there within the body which enables the infant to breathe, to move, to take food, to receive impressions, and to make responses?

### What Students of the Body Tell Us

Students of the human body have discovered, through centuries of observation, experimentation, and research, that there are within the body a number of important, intricate systems, each with its own functions to perform and yet so intimately related to, and dependent upon, all others that all work together as a unit. Among the more important of these systems are the skeletal, the circulatory, the digestive, the nervous, and the endocrine. For convenience of study we shall think of each system separately.

1. *The Skeletal System.* This is composed of the bony skeleton together with the ligaments, muscles, and fatty tissues which form the total framework of the body. It is this system that carries and protects all the others and also provides for bodily motion. It should be noted that the skeletal system of an infant differs in many respects from that of an adult. Not only is there a very apparent difference in size, but there are differences in the relative proportions of the several parts of the body; for example, an infant's head is proportionately much larger than that of an adult. Further, bones and muscles are not fully developed at birth, nor for a long time thereafter.

This information is of value to the Christian leader. It tells him that a child must not be dealt with as though he were a little adult. Care must be taken that little children are correctly handled, that they sleep in proper positions, that they be not made to sit or stand before the normal time for such postures, and that they never be allowed to become fatigued. Improper handling will have undesirable consequences in later life.

2. *The Circulatory System.* This consists of the heart, arteries, capillaries, and veins. Through these the blood stream, the very essence of human life, flows. The heart, which is centrally located, is divided into chambers, each of which has a specific function to perform. As the blood is pumped from the left side of the heart, it enters and flows through large arteries, which gradually branch out into smaller and smaller channels until the blood is brought to tiny, thin-walled tubes, called capillaries, through which all parts of the body are fed. The capillaries again merge to form veins, through which the blood, now filled with impurities which it has taken up from the tissues of the body, returns to the right side of the heart. The circuit of the blood is known as the systemic circuit. The blood now needs to be cleansed before it is sent back through the body. Accordingly there is a second circuit, known as the pulmonary circuit. In this circuit, the blood is carried to the lungs, where it is purified and filled with fresh oxygen, and then returned to the heart. In the purifying process the liver and the kidneys also play an important part. The entire circulatory system is, of course, dependent upon the digestive system for nourishment.

Even a little understanding of this system shows clearly that it is of great importance that this system be properly cared for, for impairment of it is sure to be followed by dire consequences. Good, wholesome food is a requisite. Fresh air is indispensable. If persons sleep in a closed room, the blood will not be purified and will continue to course through the body, carrying poisons to the tissues. Comfortable postures are essential in order that the heart's rhythmic movements may not be cramped. Clothing that will not interfere with the easy flow of the blood is of great importance. Plenty of pure water to cleanse the kidneys is another necessity. Sudden strains should be avoided. All of these things are of vital significance and are of value to leaders and teachers as well as to parents and physicians.

3. *The Digestive System.* Another important system is the digestive system. When it is out of order it affects the whole body. This system takes care of the food supply of the body from the time the food enters until it is either absorbed into the blood stream or expelled from the system.

As the food enters the mouth, it is cut and ground into small particles by the action of the teeth. At the same time saliva is



set free and mixed with the food. This food, now a moist pulp, passes through the esophagus into the stomach. After the food is partly digested by the action upon it of various juices secreted by the stomach, it passes into the small intestine. Within the intestinal canal the food is moved slowly by wave-like contractions of the intestinal walls themselves. At the same time, the digested foods are absorbed by the cells of the intestinal mucous membrane and thus nourish the blood stream. Non-essential materials are evacuated.

The digestive system is complete at birth, but its ability to digest various kinds of food develops slowly. Great care needs, therefore, to be given to the kinds of food which are given to the child. Proper feeding is important for growth, for physical development, for protection against disease, and for the total well-being of life. Poor digestion often affects the entire nervous system and may account for temper tantrums and other abnormalities.

4. *The Nervous System.* One of the systems of special interest to the teacher is the nervous system, because of its basic place in the whole learning process.

A small child sees a toy beside him. He wants it. He reaches out and, with a gurgle of delight, grasps it. In this simple act, apparently so effortless, a whole, very complex, internal system is operative. We call this system the nervous system.

Its center is the brain. From it and from the spinal cord a vast network of nerves reaches out to every part of the body. Each of these nerves, in turn, is a complicated system in itself, composed of nerve cells with tiny fibers running from them. At the ends these fibers branch out into still tinier fibrils, which under certain conditions form contacts with the ends of other nerve fibrils. The whole system is as complex and intricate as a great telephone system.

Now, what happened when the little child reached for his toy? In the first place, the toy itself served as a stimulus; the nerves of the eye were stimulated. Immediately a nerve current was conveyed to the brain by means of a system of nerves which carry in-going messages. In the brain a connection was made between the end of the incoming nerve and the end of an outgoing one. This outgoing nerve took a message to the hand. The

hand responded by contracting its muscles and grasping the toy. All this took place within a fraction of a second.

Every time we move any part of our body, this system is busy sending and receiving messages. The nerves which carry the messages from the sense organs to the brain are called sensory nerves; those which carry the messages from the brain to the muscles of the body are called motor nerves.

All this is of considerable importance. Every response on the part of an individual is the result of some sort of stimulation. There must be a stimulus to get a response, and the nature of the response is often determined in whole or in part by the nature of the original stimulus which called it forth. Further, there is another significant aspect. When a person walks across a lawn every day, he gradually wears a pathway in it. So, too, when a message goes over the same group of nerves again and again, gradually it wears a pathway in the nervous system. Some of these paths are already present at birth; others are made by learning. A habit, for example, is a pathway worn into an individual's nervous system. How important it is, then, that good and not bad habits be formed! How important that worth-while truths be reiterated until they are retained! How important that stimuli be used which will stimulate learners to right and worthy actions, and how vastly important that this whole nervous system be kept in the finest possible health!

5. *The Endocrine System.* The discovery of the endocrine system is of comparatively recent date. It came about through the study of individual differences in people. Why does one person move quickly and another slowly? Why does one have a large skeletal system and another a very small one? Why do some persons develop rapidly while others are greatly retarded? Scientists discovered that there are a number of small, ductless glands in the body which apparently account, at least in part, for such differences. These ductless glands compose the endocrine system. Among the more important of these are the thyroid, the pituitary, the pineal, the thymus, and the adrenal glands. Secretions from these to some extent affect physical growth, emotional disposition, mental development, and possibly even moral character.

This simple fact is of some value to church workers. For instance, some things in the behavior of pupils which are usually

quickly charged to naughtiness or viciousness may be due to glandular actions over which the pupils themselves have no control. Knowledge of this fact may lead a teacher to suggest that a child be examined by a competent physician rather than that he be punished by his parents. Often the mere recognition that pupil actions may be due to such internal causes will lead to sympathy, patience, and warm helpfulness on the part of the leader.

We have seen thus far that a child is born into the world with a physical equipment sufficient to meet the bodily needs of life. But we are sure that a human being is more than a finely constructed, intricate physical organism which automatically reacts to outward stimuli. There are factors in human life which cannot be seen through a microscope nor discovered on a dissecting table.

### What Students of the Soul Tell Us

There are persons who deny the existence of any non-material part of man. To them a human being is a body and nothing more. But there are others who are convinced that man is more than a body. Concerning the nature of this "more," there is no common agreement. Psychologists give different answers. Some call this non-material factor in man's make-up "mind"; others call it "self"; still others use such terms as "ego," "spirit," "heart," and "soul." The exact term is of little significance; the Bible itself uses different terms—heart, spirit, soul—to denote this non-material factor in man. The important thing is that there is in man an inner, spiritual reality that is the center of consciousness, of character, and of conduct—a self, or soul, that thinks, feels, wills, and acts.

This soul interacts with the body; that is, it affects the body, and the body affects it. It was created for the body and the body was created for it. The two belong together. Together they make a complete man. Further, this soul persists while the body changes, and all through the changes it is conscious of being its own self. Consider the following:

A man lies wrestling with death. After a long struggle he sinks back on his pillow and thinks. Then, as in a flash, his whole life passes before his inner eye. He sees himself as a babe, a child, a youth, a mature man, an old man. What changes have taken place in him! Not

a particle of his present physical body was his at birth—in fact, his physical body has completely changed many times—and yet he is conscious of the fact that he is still himself, the very same self which he was when he was born. How different his thoughts, his ideals, his purposes, in the different periods of his life; but they have all, in spite of their constant changing, been his very own; it has been he himself, and no other, who has had these thoughts and purposes. And now, death! The body would return to its elements, but he—his own self, his own soul—yes, he would go on being still himself.

Students of the soul, then, and especially Christian students of the soul, see something more in man than a mere physical organism; they see a non-physical, or spiritual, self which persists through all the changes of life from birth to death, and even beyond death—a soul that is immortal.

Just as the body has its systems to support and maintain physical life, so the soul has its native equipment to provide for its life. Let us endeavor to understand the more important factors in this spiritual equipment of life.

1. *Internal Forces.* Every human being possesses at birth certain inner forces which are of as great significance as is his physical equipment. Students do not agree as to the nature and classification of these. Earlier students in the field of psychology spoke of them as "instincts." William James defined an instinct as "a tendency to act in such a way as to bring about certain ends without having foresight of these ends." His list of instincts includes almost every activity of life. Dr. Thorndike, a later authority, enumerated forty or more different types of instinctive reactions. Later psychologists have divided and subdivided both James' and Thorndike's lists. Some have entirely given up the term "instincts" and have substituted such terms as "tendencies," "drives," "urges." Others do not treat these forces as such, but group all responses, whether learned or unlearned, under such terms as "modes of behavior" or "behavior patterns."

It is impossible here to enter into a fuller discussion of the various trends in modern psychology. It is sufficient for our practical purposes to conclude that every human being is born with, or very soon acquires, certain forces, tendencies, drives, urges, modes of behavior—call them what you will—which seem sufficient, when properly directed or modified, to meet man's physical, mental, and social needs. These internal forces and

their accompanying emotions are among the basic materials with which leaders and teachers must work.

2. *Inherited Capacities.* In addition to these basic forces, which are the common possession of all human beings, there are also inherited capacities and aptitudes which differ with different individuals. Thus, for example, one child may have a peculiar capacity for music; another, for languages; and a third, for development in mechanical skills. Such capacities may lie dormant for a large part of life—perhaps even throughout the whole of life. This is due to the fact that the development of the given capacity has not been stimulated into active development. Without stimulation of some sort—favorable environment, parental encouragement, opportunity for practice—the inherited capacity will not be developed. On the other hand, all the stimulation in the world cannot develop a skill for which there is no inner capacity; it is impossible, for example, to make a musical genius out of a child who has no sense of rhythm and no ear for tone. To discover a child's native capacities and aptitudes, to encourage development along these lines, to give opportunity for practice—these are some of the leader's responsibilities.

3. *The Religious Capacity.* A question which naturally arises and which is of primary importance for the Christian leader is this: Are human beings equipped at birth with an instinctive faith in, and love for, God? Available evidence would seem to indicate that this is not the case. While men undoubtedly have religious capacity at birth, and while most men early develop some sort of ideas and feelings about God, it nevertheless seems clear that there is no positive religious faith inherent in man's nature. Educators and psychologists in the field of religion are quite generally agreed that there is no special religious instinct. This is an interesting fact. Man is apparently equipped with inner drives sufficient to meet the various needs of life, but for his primary need, the need of God, he comes with no such equipment. How can this be accounted for? For surely God would not have created men without giving them the full equipment needed for spiritual, as well as for physical, mental, social, and moral, life. Christian scholars, basing their convictions upon Biblical teachings, have found the answer to this problem in the fact of sin. The thought is somewhat as follows: God created man in his own image; that is, man at creation was endowed

with the spiritual equipment necessary for life in fellowship with God. Then man, using amiss his God-given spiritual and moral freedom, sinned against God. The consequence of this was spiritual death; that is, man's God-given faculty for God was destroyed by his own act against God. Accordingly, the human race has lost its original Godward endowment. This does not mean that the human child is born without capacity for God, for the capacity still exists; but it means that a divinely implanted instinct or urge toward God does not exist at birth. This is due to what is known in theological language as "original sin."

It is at this point that Christianity comes with a distinctive and invaluable truth. It tells us that God revives the dead spiritual urge through the power of his divine Word. God, through his Word and through the sacrament of Baptism, which applies the Word to the individual's life, stimulates the individual's capacity for God and develops a growing, positive, inner urge toward God. This is known in theological language as "rebirth." In other words, spiritual human nature is reborn through the power of God and becomes a living reality in human life.

The babe, then, at birth has a capacity for God. This capacity needs to be stimulated by the only stimulus which has power to quicken it into vital spiritual life. This stimulus is the living Word of God, in which God's Holy Spirit is ever active. This living Word of God can be brought to bear upon the child's life through the preaching of the Gospel and through the sacrament of Baptism. It is the responsibility of the Christian Church—its pastors, leaders, teachers, parents, and all other members—to see that the child is brought under the influence of the divine Word in order that this inner spiritual life may be born in accordance with the will and purpose of God. The child of himself cannot find God, but God through his Word finds the child and brings him into relationship with himself through Jesus Christ, so that his Holy Spirit can awaken and guide the whole of his life.

To summarize: We have seen that human beings have at birth both a body and a soul. The body comes with certain physical equipment, and the soul with certain spiritual equipment, all of which is necessary for human life. Through the use of this equipment man's whole life is lived. It is essential, there-

fore, that this equipment be understood, cared for, developed, and guided, in order that life may become all that God intended it to become when he created man. The Christian leader's responsibility and opportunity to assist in the development and guidance of life, both physical and spiritual, are great.

### WHAT TO DO

#### *An Observation Chart*

Turn to the chart found in the Appendix of this book. You will note that it is a chart to help leaders discover pertinent facts about the members of their group. If leaders will construct a chart of this kind for each member of their group, they will in time discover many things of value concerning the nature of their pupils in particular and the nature of people in general. Section I of this chart deals with facts related to the pupil's inheritance, family relationships, home surroundings, and the like—all in line with the general material of this chapter.

In a loose-leaf notebook make at least two copies of this chart. Select two members of your church group, or, if you are not at present a leader or teacher, two persons chosen at random. Then endeavor to ascertain the facts needed to fill out Section I of the chart of each person you are studying.

Throughout this course, work on these charts will be continued. Leaders who do this work conscientiously will find their church work steadily improving.

#### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Anderson, J. E. *Happy Childhood*, 1933, pp. 3-22.

Norlie, O. M. *Elementary Christian Psychology*, 1924, pp. 13-78.

Powell, W. E. *The Growth of Christian Personality*, 1929, pp. 22-63.

Stuart, H. C. *Healthy Childhood*, 1933, pp. 75-143.

Yeaxlee, B. A. *The Approach to Religious Education*, 1932, pp. 11-56.

## CHAPTER III

### WE GROW

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter you will find a few fundamental facts about physical growth. A knowledge and understanding of these will be of value to you as a Christian leader. As you read this chapter, try to find answers to these questions:

1. What are some of the general characteristics of human growth?
2. Why do people differ physically?
3. How do physical growth and development affect attitudes and behavior?
4. How can a knowledge and understanding of the facts of growth help leaders to improve their church work?

In Chapter II we considered, among other things, man's native physical equipment. This equipment, though practically complete at birth, is by no means completely developed. As life proceeds, development takes place; man grows. Physical growth is due partly to the mysterious force or forces which God has implanted in man's very nature, and partly to external factors which constantly play a very important part in his life.

#### Physical Growth

Roughly speaking, the life of a human being may be divided into three major periods: (1) a period of growth, from birth to shortly before the twenty-fifth year; (2) a period of maturity, from about the twenty-fifth year to approximately the fiftieth; and (3) a period of physical decline, from the fiftieth year to death. Throughout the whole of life physical changes take place within the human body. Indeed, the body is not identically the same on any two successive days. Changes are constantly taking place. This is one of the characteristics of physical life.

During the first twenty to twenty-five years the changes which occur, normally make for physical development; they may be called progressive changes. It is during these years that the various parts of the body come to full maturity. Bones, muscles, ligaments, nerves, internal organs, and all other elements slowly increase in size until they have attained their maximum growth.



Then, between the twentieth and twenty-fifth years growth ceases. The period of physical maturity has arrived. Several facts about these physical changes which take place during the period of growth are of interest:

In the first place, the development of the various parts of the body is not proportionate; that is, the parts do not, as they grow, retain their original proportions to each other. Compare an infant with a mature man. Is the infant merely a miniature adult? People have thought so, and have dressed, treated, and dealt with children as though they were little men and women. But a bit of careful observation shows clearly that "the child is not a man writ small." For example, an infant's head is much larger in proportion to the rest of his body than is the head of a fully grown man. Were a babe to grow to maturity with all parts of his body developing according to their original proportions, he would, when a man, look almost exactly like the very common cartoons of prominent men; he would have an enormous head, a comparatively small trunk, little dangling arms, and even shorter legs. But men are not like this. The fact is that, while all parts change, they do not change alike. Each stage of growth has its own characteristics.

In the second place, the development of the body as a whole and of its various parts is not absolutely steady. In other words, a child does not grow at a constant rate of speed. Nor does any given part of his body grow at a constant rate. Careful observations and measurements have shown that, while there is a continuous development, this development is at times more rapid than at others. This is true, for example, of a person's growth in height. There is a period of rapid increase, followed by a period of somewhat slower increase, followed in turn by another period of more rapid increase, and so on until full height has been reached. The same is true of a person's growth in weight. Growth, therefore, may be said to be rhythmic.

In the third place, it not infrequently happens that some elements of a part of the body grow faster than other, closely related elements. For example, the muscles of the legs may grow faster than the bones of the legs, or vice versa. When this occurs, the harmony of development is interrupted, and often behavior problems arise. When a child's arm and leg muscles grow faster than the bones of these members, the child may

seem lazy and listless. On the other hand, when the bones grow faster than the muscles, the child will quite probably show signs of irritation and restlessness. Not a few behavior problems among children and young folks can be traced to irregularities in physical development. Consider a typical case and note the behavior problems:

Jane was a bright, active girl, liked by everyone. She was attractive in school and enjoyed her studies. She was obedient at home and gladly did her share of the work. But gradually Jane changed. At times she was listless; at other times, fretful. It seemed as though she could not sit still. In school she was scolded for inattention and poor preparation. Then she would cry and promise to do better, but her promise lasted little longer than her cry. Her mother, puzzled by the change, tried to shame her into better work and conduct:

"You are growing to be such a big girl, and yet you misbehave more than when you were little. Why, your little sister gets better grades in school than you do. I should think that you would be ashamed of yourself."

Poor Jane—she was ashamed. But no matter how she tried, she could not do better. She wished she were not growing so rapidly; she seemed all arms and legs. Everyone told her how big she was getting to be—if only they would let her alone.

What was wrong with Jane? Nothing, except that she was spending too much energy growing. Very likely some part of her body had been slow in developing, and now it was spurting to catch up with the other parts. This irregularity caused an extra strain on Jane's whole system, and the energy which would naturally have gone into study and work was being used in growing. Jane did not need scolding and shaming; she needed rest, fresh air, sunshine, nourishing food, and happy, understanding folks around her.

In the fourth place, it should be noted that all persons do not grow alike. While it is true that the great majority of people conform to certain general standards in height, weight, size of various parts of the body, general time of maturity, and so forth, there are wide variations. For example, if one were to measure the height of one hundred persons of a given age, over half of them would be almost exactly the same size; the remaining ones would be, some smaller, some larger. Similar results would be attained if one were to measure them for size of head, size of chest, length of arms and legs, or weight. Always there are variations. These variations from the average are due to one or

more of a number of different factors. There are variations which are due to sex. The structure of the male body differs from that of the female, and these differences affect every stage of growth; girls, for instance, normally mature earlier than boys. Then again, there are variations in growth due to race; a comparative study of different races makes this clear. But even within a given sex of a given race wide variations occur. In fact, no two individuals are exactly alike—not even twin brothers or sisters. Much of this variation, whether due to sex, race, individual constitution, or some other cause, is the result of heredity, though recent investigations have tended to show that inherited factors do not play so large a role as was once supposed.

These characteristics of human growth which we have thus far discussed—constant change, rhythmic development, disproportionate growth, and natural variation—are more or less beyond the power of human control. They are relatively, perhaps absolutely, predetermined by inheritance. Changes will take place no matter what we do; the proportions of the body will probably be what they are by nature destined to be—we cannot add one cubit to our stature; the development will go on in its own rhythmic way regardless of our desires; and there will be variations to the end of time. At most, human beings can cripple natural growth by interfering with its processes. But, though little or nothing can be done to improve nature's inherited forces, they should be understood by Christian leaders in order that individuals may not be required to do things which are utterly impossible for them, and that they may be guided to make the very most of the powers which they do by nature possess.

### External Factors in Physical Growth

Of considerably more practical importance to Christian leaders is an understanding of certain other factors, of a rather external nature, which play a very significant part in physical growth. While it is true that human nature's basic processes cannot be altered, it is equally true that conditions can be created in which these processes can function most efficiently and effectively. In other words, the external factors which affect growth can be controlled.

Among the external factors which affect growth are food, housing and clothing, rest and recreation, work and play, exercise and general physical care. Their importance cannot well be over-emphasized.

It is, of course, obvious to even the casual observer that growth and development are aided by nourishing food, well-ventilated homes, plenty of fresh air and sunshine, wholesome exercise, and proper attention to cleanliness, comfort, posture, and the like; and that, on the other hand, growth and development are impaired by malnutrition, cramped and filthy housing conditions, insufficient sleep, overwork, and sickness. Not infrequently a change in diet or in environment is quite sufficient to produce decided improvements in a person's whole physical development. But perhaps the casual observer may not be so thoroughly aware of the fact that such external factors have much to do also with a person's thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Nevertheless, it is a fact that a person's whole outlook on life, his character, and his conduct may be changed, at least to some degree, by making changes in the external forces which influence his physical well-being.

Accordingly it is of great importance that Christian leaders understand how people grow and develop, and how growth and development can be modified, controlled, and directed, in order that they may be able to contribute to the highest possible development of those committed to their care. In the following pages we shall consider a few practical matters related to growth, with a view to discovering how church work can be planned to fit in with the physical requirements and abilities of people. The discussion is limited strictly to in-church work, though out-of-church phases of the church's task are of equal, and perhaps even of greater, significance.

## Human Growth and Church Work

1. *Physical Environment.* It has been pointed out that physical environment is an important factor in human growth. The church should take this fact into consideration in planning its buildings, in securing its equipment, and in preparing its programs.

In the first place, consider the rooms in which classes are taught and meetings are held. These rooms should be amply large, well lighted, well ventilated, and thoroughly clean. These matters are important. Congestion and overcrowding not only contribute to physical discomfort, but also to mental distraction and, consequently, to inattention and unsatisfactory learning. Poor lighting has a bad effect upon the eyes and often leads to strain, which in turn may produce irritableness and lack of interest. Poor ventilation not only endangers health, but also causes drowsiness and lack of keen participation in the study or work in which the group is engaged. Lack of cleanliness is a means of spreading disease germs—something of which the church, surely, should not be guilty. Christian leaders should, therefore, make every effort to provide places of meeting which are conducive to physical well-being. Sometimes changes in rooms can be made with very little financial outlay, or at no cost at all.

In the second place, consider the general equipment of the room, which is an integral part of the physical environment. If pupils are to be comfortable—and this is necessary for the most effective learning—chairs, tables, pictures, objects, work materials, and books must be of such kind as to conform to the pupils' physical needs. The practical applications of this principle are almost numberless. There is space here to mention but a few. Take the matter of chairs. How important for right posture the size of chairs is! But more than this—how important the size of chairs is for interest, attention, and good work! Not a few problems of teachers in the lower children's departments can be traced to the fact that the children are compelled to sit in pews and chairs which were never intended for little ones of their size. Or, take the matter of pictures, charts, maps, and drawings on blackboards. All too frequently these are much too small for the children to see; or, if they are large enough, they are hung so high or so far away as to be of no real value. Consequently eye-strain develops and with it a number of other ills. Christian leaders should, accordingly, endeavor to secure for their groups that kind of equipment which is suited to their physical requirements.

2. *Physical Health.* Health, as everyone knows, is a factor of vital significance to normal growth. It must be safeguarded at

almost any cost. This is particularly true in regard to children, but it is true also in regard to young people and adults. The primary responsibility for health rests, of course, with the home. But other social institutions have a definite share in that responsibility. Public schools give considerable attention to matters of health. Many communities have set up various kinds of public agencies to minister to the health needs of their citizens. The church, too, has an obligation here. That this is true is evidenced by the fact that churches support hospitals, clinics, day nurseries, and the like, and that they send medical missionaries and nurses to foreign fields. But many churches seem not to realize that they have an equal obligation to care for the health of their own members when they come to services, meetings, and classes. The matter of room, ventilation, light, and cleanliness has already been discussed. There are other aspects of the health situation which demand equal consideration.

In the first place, consider the matter of communicable sicknesses. There is no reason why the church should not be as exacting in its requirements as are the public schools. Persons with communicable diseases should be given every possible consideration and should be ministered to in special ways; but they should not be allowed to endanger the health of others. This is particularly true in the children's departments of the church; children with colds and rashes should not be allowed to attend sessions until there is a fair degree of certainty that more serious troubles are not present. Christian leaders have a definite responsibility in this matter.

In the second place, consider the matter of discovered symptoms of physical disorders. It not infrequently happens that leaders in the church notice symptoms in children, which have escaped even the watchful eyes of parents.

Sammy was a lad of eight. He had three brothers and a sister. All the other children were exceptionally bright. Sammy, however, was dull, almost stupid. The parents could not account for this difference. Even the public school teachers of the first and second grades had not discovered the reason. Quite by accident, Sammy's Sunday school teacher found the cause: Sammy simply could not see anything on a wall chart that was more than seven feet away from him. The Sunday school teacher reported her discovery to Sammy's parents. The child was fitted with glasses. Immediately changes began to take place in the child's

behavior and work. Within a few weeks it was evident that Sammy was by no means a dull child. His difficulty lay entirely in his not being able to see.

Christian leaders owe it to the members of their group to be on the alert for things such as this, and to report them either to the person himself, if he is old enough to understand, or to his parents.

In the third place, consider the matter of adolescent and middle-adult physical changes. During these two periods of life very important physical changes take place. It is imperative that persons be prepared for these in advance of their occurrence. Normally this preparation is taken care of by parents and by physicians. However, there are persons who do not receive the necessary instructions, and they need guidance. Christian leaders should be in a position to help such persons, at least to the extent of suggesting to them that they see a physician and secure his counsel.

In ways such as those just described, church leaders can make positive contributions to the physical well-being of the members of their groups. It is highly desirable that they do so.

3. *Physical Activities.* Another practical matter closely related to growth is that of physical activities. Such activities are receiving an ever larger place in the church's program. It is highly important that these activities be properly graded to accord with the physical abilities of pupils.

Consider, first, the matter of exercise. As we have seen, muscles, bones, and other physical elements of the human body grow. To grow as they should, exercise is needed. This is particularly true of children, whose ceaseless activity is nature's means of developing their bodies. Accordingly, the church's program, particularly for children, should provide for at least a degree of physical exercise. In church schools and societies such exercises as games, marches, walks, and handwork have a perfectly legitimate place; and these may be supplemented by picnics, hikes, sports, and other out-of-door activities.

Quite as important as exercise, and closely related to it, is the matter of rest. School and society sessions which extend beyond an hour should provide for brief rest periods. Even adults will find a breathing space of value, and for children such moments of relaxation are highly important.

Consider, secondly, the matter of muscular control and co-ordination. It is a known fact that muscular control is acquired slowly and that there are times when, having been acquired, it is temporarily lost again because of new developments within the bodily structure. It is a known fact, too, that the smaller muscles develop somewhat later. These facts have a direct bearing upon such items of the church's program as handwork. Little children, for example, cannot be expected to do things which require the accurate use of the small muscles of the fingers. They must, therefore, be allowed to work with fairly large objects, to draw on large sheets of paper with large crayons, to cut out pictures which are very simple in outline, and so forth. The handwork of each age-group must take into account the physical abilities of the group.

The same is true of singing. It stands to reason that hymns and songs should be graded to the comprehension of persons of various ages, but with this mental aspect we are not at present concerned. Equally important it is that the tunes be graded to the singing ability of the various age-groups. Much harm can be done, and has been done, by using hymns and songs which are beyond the physical ability of pupils. Little children have a rather limited pitch range, beginning usually with "D" or "E" above middle "C" and running up the scale for about one octave; hymns and songs for them should be written within this range. Similarly, care should be taken during the earlier years of the adolescent period when voices are changing, for here again much harm can be done by requiring pupils to sing beyond the range of their physical ability.

We have examined a few of the ways in which church work and the physical growth of persons are related. There are, of course, many others. These few will suffice to indicate that there is real value in understanding the nature of man's physical development. Christian leaders who know the physical characteristics of their groups and also the physical peculiarities of each member of their groups will be in a far better position to render helpful service and to engage in effective work than will leaders who are ignorant of the bodily changes which are taking place within the members of their classes and societies. In Chapters X, XI, and XII the physical characteristics of the various age-groups will be considered in somewhat more detail.



## WHAT TO DO

*My Observation Charts*

Turn to the chart in the Appendix. You have, presumably, made at least two copies of it in your notebook. Consider Section II, which deals with physical characteristics. Think again of the two persons whom you have begun to study. Fill out Section II.

In addition, do one of the following:

*Improvements in Room and Equipment*

In view of your study of this chapter, what improvements can you make in the room where you meet with your church group? Think of the following: Size of room; sunshine; ventilation; size of tables and chairs; pictures, maps, charts, and blackboard; books and other literature. Make a list of possible improvements along these lines. Endeavor to introduce at least one of them.

*Improvements in Group Activities*

In view of your study of this chapter, what improvements can you make in the nature of your group activities? Think of the following: Kinds of activity suitable to your group; length of activity period; rest periods. Make a list of possible improvements along these lines. Endeavor to introduce at least one of them.

## HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Gruenberg, B. C. *Guidance of Childhood and Youth*, 1929, pp. 176-280.

Inskeep, A. D. *Child Adjustment*, 1930, pp. 1-275.

McLester, F. C. *Our Pupils and How They Learn*, 1930, pp. 86-118.

Powell, W. E. *The Growth of Christian Personality*, 1929, pp. 64-91.

The following books on sex education are listed for reference. They should be of value to leaders who find themselves confronted by such problems.

de Schweinitz, K. *Growing Up*, 1928.

Dickerson, R. E. *Growing into Manhood*, 1933.

Elliott, G. L. *Understanding the Adolescent Girl*, 1930.

Elliott, G. L. and Bone, H. *Sex Life of Youth*, 1929.

Gray, A. H. *Men, Women, and God*, 1923.

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## CHAPTER IV

# WE FEEL

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

Not only do people grow; but, as they grow, they feel. Anyone who knows human beings knows that feelings, especially their stronger feelings, play a very significant role in their make-up and development. It is important, therefore, that Christian leaders attempt to understand the emotional side of human nature. As you read this chapter, look for answers to these questions:

1. What are emotions and where do they come from?
2. Can emotions be controlled?
3. What can Christian leaders do to help the members of their group build up and control emotions?
4. What are some of the outstanding values of emotions?
5. What are some of the problems caused by emotions?

Observe a tiny baby in his little crib. Rattle a toy near him; at once he gurgles with delight. Let his mother take him into her arms; immediately he shows his satisfaction. Let her suddenly remove her hand from under his head; just as quickly he registers fright and perhaps will begin to cry. It is evident that the little baby has feelings—of pleasure, of comfort, of insecurity—and that these find expression in what he does. Throughout life people have feelings, and these often affect their thoughts, their attitudes, their ideals, and their acts. A feeling that is strong enough to affect a person's life is known as an "emotion."

Emotions vary greatly in intensity. Some are mild; others, very strong. They vary also in duration. Some pass in a moment; others last for a long time. They vary, too, in value. Some are wholesome and helpful; others, unwholesome and harmful. Emotions can make life almost a heaven, or, on the other hand, they can turn it into a veritable hell. It is clear, then, that emotions are of great significance. Therefore, they need to be understood, particularly by Christian leaders, who have a responsibility for molding and guiding the life of those committed to their trust.

If growing persons are to be led into the fullness of Christian faith and life—and this is the specific, primary task of Christian leaders—then they must be led not only to know Christian

truth, but also to live it. Accordingly, Christian feelings must be developed—feelings which are strong enough to move persons to live the Christian life. On the other hand, feelings which lead to unchristian attitudes and acts must be checked or changed in order that the whole life may be harmonious in its Christian expression. Therefore, again, Christian leaders must understand the nature of human emotions and know how to deal with them.

### The Nature of Emotions

We have seen that emotions are feelings which are strong enough to move a person—to affect a person's life. Consider two or three examples:

A worldly man, whose life is anything but a blessing either to himself or to others, drops into a church service—he himself scarcely knows why. The service makes no impression; he is indifferent to it. But suddenly something in the preacher's message grips him. The man becomes quickly alert. He sits forward in his pew. He listens intently. His heart beats faster. His breath comes quickly. He has caught something from the sermon for which he has been looking and longing for years. His whole being seems to change. After the service he hastens home and shuts himself in a room, alone. An hour later he emerges, a changed man. Church membership becomes meaningful. Family life is transformed. Old ways are discarded; new ways are adopted. Why all these changes? Because something has moved him deeply enough to make over his whole life.

A young girl is swinging under a tree in her back yard. Her thoughts wander away to people in other lands. She thinks of their needs, their spiritual distress, their lack of knowledge of the Saviour. As she thinks, her spirit is awakened by her thoughts. That feeling leads to years of hard study and of preparation for work in a foreign mission field, and eventually to years of marvelous service in far-off India. Why all this? Partly, at least, because something has moved her strongly enough to influence the whole of her life.

A four-year-old boy just "loves" Sunday school. He is regular in attendance, eager and happy. No greater punishment can be meted out to him than to tell him that he may not go to Sunday school. Then, one day, he tells his mother that he does not want to go to Sunday school any more. She insists, but he struggles against going. She herself takes him, but at the school door he draws back, trembles, cries. He does not want to go in. Why? The mother makes inquiry and finds that on the previous Sunday his teacher, in a huff of excitement caused by the unexpected arrival of visitors, scolded and shook the child violently for some trivial offense. The teacher's actions had produced in the child a

feeling of fear, of insecurity, of unfairness on the part of the teacher, and it was strong enough to change his whole attitude toward Sunday school.

Emotions, then, are active, sometimes dynamic, feelings which powerfully grip people and affect their life, either temporarily or permanently. Where do they come from? How are they produced?

It is highly probable that human beings are born with a few emotional tendencies and that all human emotions gradually develop from these. In ancient times these emotional tendencies were believed to have their center in certain internal organs, particularly in the heart. Today scientists find the seat of emotional life in a part of the general nervous system called the "autonomic system." This consists of a number of nerves which branch out from the general system and indirectly run to the heart, blood vessels, lungs, stomach, intestines, smooth muscles, and several glands. This autonomic system is divided into three parts: an upper, a middle, and a lower division. The upper and lower divisions seem to work together; the middle division, alone. When the upper and lower are functioning, the middle is inactive; when it becomes active, the other two become passive. Now, it appears that it is the activity of the middle division which causes emotions.

What happens when an emotion—let us say fear—is aroused? At once, in response to the stimulus which provokes the fear, the middle division of the autonomic system becomes active. The heart beats faster and sends more blood to the brain, the lungs, the muscles of the legs and arms, and the skin. At the same time certain glands, particularly the adrenal glands, pour larger amounts of their secretions into the blood stream. The lungs breathe faster. Arms and legs become stronger. The sweat glands function. Meanwhile, other bodily processes, such as digestion, practically come to a stop. The whole body, accordingly, undergoes change. All these changes are evidences of the presence of fear. The amount of fear which is present is directly related to the amount of activity in the autonomic system.

From what has been said thus far, it might seem as though emotions work entirely automatically and that nothing can be done about them. This, however, is by no means the case; for there are many factors which enter into making emotions what

they are. Except for the original tendencies, which are inborn, all emotions are the result of experience and learning; that is, they are built up throughout life. Into this building process many factors enter. There is, for instance, the example set by other people. A little child has as little fear of a snake as he has of a household pet. His fear is acquired, largely from the example set by other persons. When he sees that they are afraid, he becomes afraid. Further, past experience is an important factor in building up emotions. A child who does his Sunday school homework regularly, only to find that his teacher never makes use of his preparation, soon develops a feeling that homework for Sunday school is absolutely useless. When, later, a teacher begins to call for homework, it will be very difficult for the child to overcome his feeling of the worthlessness of it; his experience has built up an emotion which cannot be readily overcome. Health, too, is an important factor. Emotions that are built up during periods of ill health have a way of persisting long after good health is restored.

Since these various factors—example, experience, health—are at least partly within man's power to control, emotions also must be partly within his control. They can be directed, strengthened, weakened, changed, and otherwise controlled.

### The Control of Emotions

It has just been stated that emotions can be controlled. The building up of control is a matter of learning. This learning can be guided by the leader. Just as a teacher can help a person to acquire knowledge, so he can help a person to enrich or to change his emotions. While Christian leaders are aware of their responsibilities for helping their pupils to develop a knowledge and understanding of Christian facts and truths, many of them do not seem to be aware of the fact that they have an equal responsibility and opportunity to help their pupils develop truly Christian feelings. And yet a person's feelings are at least as important as is his knowledge; for, generally speaking, feelings influence as much of man's behavior as does knowledge. Many a person knows what he ought to do, but does not do it because he does not feel like doing it. The Christian leader who wants to do his full duty and to make the most of his opportunities must,

then, understand what he can do to help the members of his group develop emotional control. What are some things he can do?

1. *Determining Helpful and Harmful Emotions.* The first thing for a Christian leader to do is to determine what feelings are good, wholesome, helpful, worth while, and what feelings are not. Only then will he be in a position to know what feelings to strengthen and enrich, and what feelings to change or weaken. Certain ones, like trust, love, sympathy, duty, courage, wonder, reverence, and joy, will commend themselves as being Christian; others, like jealousy, suspicion, anger, hatred of others, over-anxiety, dejection, and despair, will not thus commend themselves. The leader's standard will, of course, be the spirit of Jesus Christ. Those emotions which are in harmony with his spirit are wholesome; others are not.

2. *Strengthening Helpful Emotions.* The Christian leader's second task will be to help in the strengthening of those feelings which are wholesome and helpful. This can be done in many different ways: by personal example, by preparing situations which call forth the highest emotions, by definite instruction concerning right feelings, by giving pupils opportunities to express wholesome emotional reactions—to mention but a few. Consider this example:

A Beginners' teacher held up a beautiful Easter lily before her group. "Ah!" came spontaneously from almost the whole group of children.

Some clapped their hands; others reached for the flower. The teacher drew the children closer to her and let them touch the lily and smell its fragrance. She herself touched it gently, smelt it, admired it, and said, as she did so,

"God made the lily. Isn't it lovely?"

After each child had had an opportunity to see and touch and smell it, the teacher asked,

"Shall I tell you a story about the lily?"

Eagerly the children listened as she told simply and quietly how, long ago, God made the flowers; how he cares for them; how Jesus told his friends that, as God loves the lily and cares for it, so he cares for and loves his children. Then, while the pianist played softly the music, the teacher repeated the words of a song about God's care of lilies and of his children. After the teacher had repeated the words several times, all sang the song. Then they admired the lily again and thanked God for making the lovely lily, for caring for it, for caring for them.

What had the teacher done? The children had had a feeling of wonder before the session began (note the spontaneous "Ah!")

which came from them). She had strengthened and enriched this emotion: (1) by her own example (note her own attitude); (2) by preparing a situation which called forth the children's emotions (note that the teacher brought the lily to the attention of the group); (3) by definite instruction (note the story part of the procedure); and (4) by giving the pupils an opportunity again to express their feeling (note the song and the prayer). In these ways she had enriched and developed the natural response of wonder which she found expressed by her children at the sight of the lily. And she had done more than this; she had added the thought of God to that of the lily; she had added a feeling of wonder toward God to the feeling of wonder toward the lily. In some such way as this, other Christian emotions can be built up, strengthened, and enriched.

A word should be said at this point, cautioning against the over-development of even good emotions. It is entirely possible to carry good emotions to a point where they become injurious rather than helpful. For example, the feeling of trust may be carried to the point where it becomes mere credulity; loyalty may be developed into sheer fanaticism; "fear of God" may be turned into a feeling of dread of God. The wise leader endeavors to build up in himself and in his pupils not only wholesome emotions, but also that inner control which will keep these emotions within the bounds of true helpfulness.

3. *Changing Harmful Emotions.* A third thing the Christian leader can do is to change unwholesome and harmful emotions. This is quite as important as the building up and strengthening of those which are good. There are many ways of accomplishing this; for instance, by personal expressions of contempt for unwholesome feelings, by avoiding the creation of situations which call forth such feelings, by direct instruction against unchristian emotions, and by setting an example through personal conquest of unworthy emotional feelings. But by all means the most effective way is by substituting a situation which calls forth a wholesome emotion to take the place of the unwholesome one. Here is an example:

A new superintendent of a Junior department asked the children if they would like to use one of the Psalms which they had memorized, in their worship service.

"No ma'am! We hate Psalms!" came the surprising answer.



The wise superintendent said no more, but tried to discover the reason for such general dislike of the Psalms. She was not long in discovering it: the children had been made to memorize one Psalm a month. Every Sunday they had been drilled and drilled as a group and as individuals. Nothing had ever been said about how the Psalms were written or about their beauty and meaning. They were just repeated verse by verse until the children knew them.

The new superintendent made her plans to change an unpleasant emotion into a pleasant one, or rather to substitute a pleasant and wholesome one for the unwholesome one which existed. At first she said nothing about the Psalms, but talked about some of the group's favorite hymns. She told stories about the writers of these hymns, about how the hymns were written, about how they had been used through the ages. She spoke about the singing of the early Christians and of Jesus and his disciples, and pointed out that in all ages men have praised God through beautiful songs. Someone asked about the singing of the people before Jesus' time. This led directly to a discussion of songs in the Old Testament and then to the Psalms. The children were told about worship in the Hebrew synagogue and temple, about musical instruments and choirs, and about the use of various Psalms on special occasions.

Gradually the feeling of dislike was replaced by a definite liking for the Psalms, and within a few months the children were participating in worship services in which the Psalms had a welcome place.

What had the superintendent done? She had changed an undesirable emotional experience into a desirable one by gradually substituting things which produced pleasure for things which produced displeasure and disgust. And while she was changing this emotional situation, she was also accomplishing many other worth-while results: developing understanding of worship, leading the pupils to a greater knowledge of the song treasures of the church, acquainting the pupils with leading hymnists, and so forth.

4. *Expressing Helpful Emotions in Worth-while Activities.* Under "Strengthening Helpful Emotions" something was said about expression; but this matter of expressing emotions is of sufficient importance to merit a bit of elaboration. Not infrequently there is found in people a tendency to develop emotions for their own sake. For instance, there are persons who have developed a feeling of humility to the point where they are satisfied with doing nothing but being humble. They excuse themselves from Christian service on the ground that they do not have the ability to serve. They feel their own feeling of humility so keenly that it cripples their worth to God and man.

The same is true of other, in themselves quite wholesome, emotions.

Emotion for emotion's sake is not really Christian. Emotions are intended by God to be forces which move people to action. Faith is intended for faithfulness in living; love, for self-sacrificing service; reverence, for worship; the sense of responsibility, for assuming responsibility; and so forth. One of the tasks of Christian leaders, therefore, is to give wholesome emotions an opportunity to express themselves in life—in active participation in worship and work, in fellowship and service.

### Some Values of Emotions

It has already been pointed out in this chapter that emotions may be tremendous forces for good. What, more specifically, are some of their outstanding values?

In the first place, wholesome, Christian emotions are mighty factors in the development of Christian faith. Faith, as we shall see in Chapter VI, is something more than intellectual belief. It is intellectual belief plus. That "plus" is largely composed of feelings—deep, stirring, moving feelings. If children, young people, and adults are to develop true faith, their emotions must be aroused. If they are to retain their faith in the midst of problems, difficulties, doubts, and the attacks of those who have no Christian faith, their emotions must be built up to a point where they will help the persons to be victorious over the onslaughts of unbelief. Quite frequently when mental adjustments to new learning must be made, it is built-up emotion which keeps faith firm and strong during the period of readjustment. The Jesuit father who stated that he was willing to have others guide children and young folks, provided he might have them until they were six years of age, knew what he was talking about; he knew that during those first six years he could build up emotions within the lives of those little ones which would normally be strong enough to help them weather the storms of later life.

In the second place, Christian emotions are powerful forces in helping people to form and live up to high ideals. Christian living is to a large extent living for ideals. Everyday life, with its numberless practical requirements, has a way of leading people

to live by the practical standards of the world, of getting them to compromise with things as they are or with things as the world thinks they should be, and of drawing them away from the eager pursuit of high ideals. Countless evidences of this are everywhere. The child is encouraged by his companions to live by their standards; the youth is appealed to to go along with the crowd; the mature man or woman is expected to keep in step with prevailing customs and fashions; the citizen is asked to obey his government, whether the government is right or wrong. If Christian ideals are to be held and upheld, those who hold them must have convictions which are thoroughly emotionalized; they must feel, as well as know, that these ideals are worth living for, suffering for, dying for.

In the third place, emotions give warmth to the numberless activities of daily life. Life can become very cold, monotonous, and tiresome; it needs deep feelings to keep it aglow. Routine work will become a boring grind, if the values of that work for mankind are not felt; human fellowship will become a barren thing, if feelings are left out of it; church going will be nothing but a formality, if it is not charged with deep feelings of joy at the privilege of communing with God and of associating with other of God's children. And so almost every activity of life would lose its deepest and richest meanings, should its accompanying emotions be eliminated. Life without feelings would be practically death.

These are but a few of the values of human feelings, but they are sufficient to show that church leaders need to give much consideration to the building up and nurturing of Christian emotions in the lives of the members of their groups. If they are to do this effectively, these leaders must understand emotions.

### Some Emotion Problems

Emotions not only help to create values, but frequently tend also to produce difficult problems. It will probably not be overstating the case to say that the majority of human problems lie in the realm of the emotions. Think of the problems that are caused by fear, worry, distrust, hatred, jealousy, sexual passion, greed, selfishness, a feeling of inferiority or superiority, despair, remorse. All these lie primarily in the emotional nature of man.

It is impossible to treat in a course such as this the innumerable problems which Christian leaders meet in their work. Only a very few can here be mentioned.

In the first place, there is the person who is over-emotional—who feels too quickly, too keenly, and too long anything that touches his life: the supersensitive person who weeps at a simple story, who is quickly offended at even a casual remark, who worries about almost nothing, who is afraid of his own shadow; the temperamental person who flares up upon the slightest provocation, who is all optimism one moment and all pessimism the next, who is devotion itself one day and complete estrangement the day following; the emotional addict who, like the drug addict, craves more and more and can never be satisfied, who lives only for one thrill after another, whose whole life is a round of excitement, who lives on his nerves. All such over-emotional persons create problems—indeed, are problems.

What can Christian leaders do about them, and for them? Such persons need to develop self-control. The process of building up such control is a long, slow process, at least generally. Much patience, wisdom, and tact are needed in guiding and helping them. The suggestions already offered under "The Control of Emotions" should prove helpful.

In the second place, there is the person who is under-emotional—who feels too slowly, too lightly, and too briefly even the most stirring things of life: the insensitive person who apparently is not moved by right or wrong, by goodness and sin, by beauty and ugliness, by human joys and sorrows; the lethargic or phlegmatic person who is slow, drowsy, inert, difficult to interest, hard to move; the all-intellectual person who has so overdeveloped his mind that his feelings have become deadened and dull.

Probably every Christian leader has had experiences with persons of this kind. In some respects they are harder to deal with than are over-emotional persons, though they do not normally cause so much trouble in a group. They are often the boys and girls and men and women who sit through a session without any personal participation, who do not respond to appeals, who are simply not interested. What can be done? Sometimes the root of the difficulty is inherited, in which case very little, if anything, can be accomplished with them; some-

times the difficulty is largely physical, in which case the help of a competent physician is essential; sometimes, however, this lack of emotional responsiveness is due to improper training—to constant repression by parents and others, to overdevelopment of the purely mental side of life, or to lack of emotional stimulation—in which case it becomes the Christian leader's task to try to counteract past training and to stimulate the emotional life by searching for new and vivid stimuli which are strong enough to call forth emotional responses.

To conclude: Emotions play a powerful part in life, for good and for evil. Fortunately they can be controlled. It is the Christian leader's task to help the members of his group strengthen wholesome emotions, substitute wholesome for unwholesome ones, and control all, whether wholesome or unwholesome.

### WHAT TO DO

#### *My Observation Charts*

Continue work on these, giving special attention to Section III.

#### *The Study of an Emotional Problem*

Perhaps some member of your church group has an emotional problem, which causes behavior difficulties. Try to follow this procedure:

1. Consider the *source* of his trouble. Is it inherited, physical, mental, moral, or spiritual?

2. Consider the *situation* which seems to provoke the disturbance or stimulate the difficulty. Does the difficulty seem to be caused by some individual, by the group as a whole, by the physical environment, by the nature of the materials which are being used?

3. Seek a *solution*. The solution will depend upon your answers to the foregoing. You may find that the person needs medical attention or the counsel of a person trained in solving emotional problems. You may find that a change in environment will help, or placement in another group, or more, or less, opportunity for self-expression, or the use of new materials and activities, or a frank talk.

4. Proceed to apply the *remedy*. See what you can do to improve the person's behavior. Watch carefully your progress and note your results.

### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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## CHAPTER V

### WE THINK

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

Just as it is part of human nature to grow and feel, so it is, to think. Thinking, as everyone knows, is a vital part of living. Spiritual life as well as secular life requires it. How utterly meaningless and valueless our religion would be if it were deprived of its thought content! Accordingly, every Christian leader will find it profitable to understand at least the rudiments of how thinking takes place. As you read this chapter, you will find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the process by which thinking takes place?
2. What part does experience play in thinking?
3. What part does memory play in it?
4. What part does reasoning play in it?
5. What part does imagination play in it?
6. What part does vocabulary play in it?
7. Of what practical value is the study of thought processes?

When a human being comes into this world, he possesses, as we have seen, a body and a soul, each having certain equipment for living. In all life processes, soul and body work together, each acting upon the other, using the equipment of the other, and contributing to the welfare of the other and thus to the welfare of the whole man. Precisely how the two interact perhaps nobody knows. Scholars disagree. These disagreements come to the fore particularly in the study of the processes of thinking. There are scholars who hold that thinking is controlled entirely by the soul, others who maintain that it is absolutely determined by bodily reactions, and still others who declare that it is the result of a subtle interaction of body and soul. Whatever the final solution of the problem, a few facts about the process of human thinking seem to be clear and of definite practical value to the Christian leader. We shall, in this chapter, consider the main steps in thinking and then study in more detail a few aspects of it, a knowledge and understanding of which will be of particular service to teachers and other leaders in the church.

## The Process of Thinking

Human beings are born with a capacity and an equipment for thinking. The capacity is called "intelligence"; the equipment lies largely in the brain and the rest of the nervous system. Careful research has shown that not all persons are born with the same intelligence any more than they are born with the same physical strength. It is now possible to determine, at least to some extent, the native intellectual capacity of an individual. This is done by the use of very carefully prepared intelligence tests.

Given this native intelligence and the necessary equipment for thinking, how does thinking take place? What is the process? It will not be surprising to discover that the process is a very complex one involving a great many factors. No attempt is made here to be all-inclusive or exhaustive; only the main facts of the process are presented.

1. *Knowledge.* Preparatory to thinking there must be some knowledge, for all thinking is based on it. Knowledge comes from experience. Experience is one of two kinds: personal or vicarious. Personal experience is that which a person has himself; vicarious, is that which he gets from the experience of others. How do people get experience and how does this lead to knowledge?

In the first place, we have what are called "sensations." Something stimulates the sensitive end of a sensory nerve; the nerve carries a message to the brain; the brain receives a sensation. For example, the fragrance of a lily stimulates the sensitive end-organ of the olfactory nerve, which carries a message to the brain, and here a sensation of the lily's particular odor results. In similar ways countless sensations are had every day.

In the second place, these sensations are put together, by the process of perception, to form what are called "percepts." For example, a certain object stimulates a large number of sensations—let us say, of roundness, softness, yellowness, juiciness, and sweetness. When we put all these together we have the percept "orange"; we perceive that the object is an orange. We have a percept of an object only while the object is before us. The moment it is removed we no longer perceive it. But some-



thing does remain. This something, a kind of mental picture of the object, is called an "idea."

In the third place, these percepts are at once related to ideas which are already present at the time the particular object is viewed. Thus each impression that is made is modified to some extent by ideas already in the mind.

In some such way as this, basic knowledge is acquired from experience: stimuli produce sensations; sensations are grouped to form percepts; percepts, modified by already existing impressions, produce ideas; and ideas are the rudimentary factors in knowledge.

2. *Association.* Ideas do not normally remain alone, detached from one another. By a process of nerve connections, sensations and percepts become related to other sensations and percepts, and, as a consequence, ideas too become associated with other ideas, the new enriching the old and the old modifying the new.

3. *Memory.* In order to be useful for thinking and, consequently, for living, ideas must be available when they are needed. Therefore they must be retained, recalled, and recognized. This process is known as "memory." It is of fundamental importance, for without it thinking would be impossible. We shall consider it in more detail later.

4. *Imagination.* It is possible to do more than merely recall and recognize ideas; it is possible to group them consciously into new combinations. A number of ideas, quite unrelated to each other, may be selected and put together to form a totally new idea. This process is called "imagination." In thinking, imagination may become injurious and harmful, but it may also become exceedingly valuable. When the imagination is controlled, it may be very beneficial; when uncontrolled, very dangerous.

5. *Conception.* Further, the mind has power to take a large group of specific ideas and through them to arrive at general ideas. Thus, for example, we can take a great number of ideas about individual men and by examining these—rejecting the things which are peculiar to only a number of men and keeping those which are common to all men—arrive at a general concept "man." A concept, then, is a general idea that may be applied to many individuals of a class. The process by which concepts are formed is known as "conception." Concepts are not fixed ele-

ments in our mind. They change in parts as experience changes. They grow, and that which makes them grow is thought.

Conception is the real beginning of thinking. Sensations, perceptions, associations of ideas, memory, and imagination, all play a part in the process of thinking, but what should rightly be called thinking begins with the formation of concepts. When boys and girls, and men and women, begin to gather numberless ideas together so as to form general concepts, they have really begun to think.

6. *Reasoning.* Reasoning is the highest form of thinking. It is the process by which human beings endeavor to establish the connection between things. It begins with a problem—a problem of the relationship of two or more things. Tentatively, upon the basis of past knowledge, it forms a judgment of what that relationship may be. Then it looks for facts, examines them, tries to understand them and to fit them together. If these do not fit in with the tentatively formed judgment, it rejects that judgment and looks for another which agrees with the facts thus far discovered. Then it seeks more facts. And so the process goes on until a reason is established, a reason that is true to all the known facts. When this reason is established, it is possible to explain what has happened or to predict what will happen. This explanation or this prediction will be proved true or false by the discovery of still more facts. If the explanation or prediction is true, then the process of reasoning was true; if it is false, then the reasoning was false. This whole process, as has been said, is the highest form of thinking.

And the reason for reasoning? It is to guide and further the highest and best kind of living, for out of reasoning comes development of character and conduct. The importance of right reasoning is, accordingly, apparent.

The total process of thinking from the reception of sensations to the exercise of reasoning has been briefly traced in order to give some idea, however crude, of what happens when human beings think. Perhaps the value of all this for practical church work is not immediately apparent. But there is real value in it, for at every point it has a definite bearing upon teaching procedures. It shall be our purpose now to select a few points of particular significance and to try to make clear the value of this knowledge for Christian leaders.

## Experience and Thinking

At the bottom of all thinking, as has been said, is knowledge; and knowledge is derived directly or indirectly from experience. Someone has defined thinking as "the process of reconstructing past experience to provide place for the material gathered from new experience." It will be seen, then, that experience is of tremendous importance for thinking. The wider a person's range of experience, the more material does he have for thinking. This fact has certain very definite implications for the Christian leader.

One of the tasks of the church worker is to help the members of his group to think about spiritual things—God, Christ, the Spirit, faith, love, worship, etc.—in order that he may intelligently live in them. But to think about them at all, these persons must have at least some experience of them. Accordingly, the leader must do something to help the members of his group to have experiences, or, if this cannot be done, to understand the experiences of others. A child or a grown-up cannot think about God unless he knows about God, and he cannot know about God—who he is, what he is like, what he does—unless he has had personal experience of God or has come to understand other people's experiences of God. Therefore the Christian leader must help his group understand the experiences of the great prophets, of Jesus Christ, of Christian men and women, and also lead his group into the experience of Bible reading, meditation, communion with God. In this way the basis will be laid for real thinking about God. And the same is true of all other realities of life. In every case a knowledge basis must be laid, if thinking is to take place.

Further, care must be taken that the knowledge basis is true, for thinking which is built up on knowledge which is not true will lead only to false conclusions. If wrong impressions are made, if wrong ideas are formed, if ideas are wrongly associated with each other, then thinking, no matter how careful and accurate the process, is sure to lead to wrong concepts and conclusions. For example, every fact stated about the Bible must be true and it must be properly related to other facts, or the pupil's thinking about the Bible will be warped.

Again, it must be remembered that the pupil's past experi-

ences enter into every new idea which he forms. If these past experiences are not of the right sort, they must be counteracted by new experiences which are of the right sort; for only so will right ideas be formed and right conclusions reached. For example, if a child has a cruel father and his Sunday school teacher says, "God is our Father in heaven," the child will at once conclude that God is cruel. The greatest care must be taken to counteract the effect of past experiences which are not right.

Here, then, are three distinct practical values from our study, and there are many others: the Christian leader must help the members of his group to have experiences of the things of which he is to think; he must help them have right experiences; he must endeavor to counteract wrong experiences.

### Memory and Thinking

We have seen that memory is essential to thinking. Without it there could be no thinking at all. Past experiences are of value only as they are retained, recalled, and recognized. This process of retention, recall, and recognition we term "memory."

The retention of experiences—facts, truths, ideas, concepts, etc.—can be assisted. There are many things which help one to remember; for example, the vividness of an experience, the attention which was paid at the time, the mental associations which were formed, the number of times it was repeated. Here again are practical values for the Christian leader. If people are to be led to think, they must first be helped to retain the fundamental facts and ideas on which thinking depends. The leader can help by making things clear and vivid, and by getting the learner to focus his attention sharply on what he is learning, to associate new ideas with old ones, and to practice repetition. A teacher who is uninteresting, monotonous, unclear in his presentation, who makes no attempt to associate new truths with old, and who does not repeat, cannot expect his pupils to get much knowledge, to remember, and to do much worth-while thinking.

It is not sufficient merely to retain ideas and truths; they must be recalled. Recall is bringing things back to consciousness, bringing them to mind. Sometimes this is done spontaneously; sometimes it requires effort. There are things which hinder

recall—for example, fear, strange surroundings and strange persons, self-consciousness, fatigue, and too great eagerness to recall. Here are practical values for leaders and teachers: help people to feel at home; help them take their minds off themselves; help them to confidence; if they are too tired to think, do not expect them to do so; do not fatigue them by too much work or study; and, if they cannot recall at the moment, turn to something else—they may recall what is wanted, a little later when they are not too intent upon remembering it. On the other hand, there are ways of helping persons to recall—for example, by suggestions, by stimulating associated ideas, by giving opportunity for practice in recalling. These, too, suggest practical values: when people cannot recall something essential to their thinking, suggest ideas which are related to what they are trying to recall and also give them opportunities to practice bringing things to mind.

Another element in the memory process is recognition—the power to associate ideas with the realities which originally produced them. For example, you meet a person and form an idea of him; a year later you meet him again; if your old idea of him does not agree with your present impression of him, you will not recognize him; if it does, you will recognize him.

Recognition is easier than recall. For example, it is easier to recognize a picture when we see it again than it is to recall it when it is not before us; or, it is easier to recognize a word in a sentence than it is to recall that word. That is why a person's reading vocabulary is larger than his speaking vocabulary. Recognition is hindered and helped much as is recall.

Our study of the memory process, accordingly, has real, practical worth. When we understand how memories are retained and recalled, and how formerly experienced things are recognized, we can help people to greater knowledge and better thinking.

### Reasoning and Thinking

We have seen that reasoning is a part of thinking—the highest form of thinking. From what has already been said concerning it, it will be evident that careful and accurate reasoning is not an easy process; it requires mental exertion. It takes real mental effort to try to see the exact relation between things, to

see what is cause and what is effect, to fit new knowledge into old, and old into new. It requires the formulation of a hypothesis, the patient observation of facts, the careful selection of facts which are related to the problem in hand, the careful comparison of discovered facts with the hypothesis, the rejection of the hypothesis if it is not tenable in the light of the facts, the formulation of a new hypothesis, the testing of the new one by still further examination of more facts. This is not easy and it takes time and effort. But it is essential if we are to reach conclusions that are true, and true conclusions are essential to right living.

Reasoning has no self-starter. People do not reason unless something makes them do it. There must be motivation—something to move people to engage in it. In other words, there must be a problem of vital interest and value to them, or they will not reason; they will merely accept ideas that are given them and will not inquire into whether these are true or false. It is imperative that people be led to think, to think things through, and to come to right conclusions. Otherwise they will be at the mercy of anyone who is strong enough to influence them. For example: Here is a man who does not believe in foreign missions. He does not believe in them because, perhaps, he has read a book against them. He is satisfied in his own mind that foreign missions are wrong or worthless. He will do nothing further about the matter unless some problem arises or is brought to his attention, which involves the matter of foreign missions. Then, if the problem seems to him of real importance, he will begin to reason, and not till then. Precisely the same is true of everything else in life. People must be moved to think; that is, they must be led to see problems and to set out to solve them.

Here lies the Christian leader's opportunity. He can help people see, and understand, and learn how to solve their problems. Many people do not even realize that they have problems. Here, for example, is a teacher whose children pay no attention; but he goes sublimely on his way telling them Bible stories which they never get. He, apparently, is not even aware that they are not learning anything. The first thing that needs to be done is to make him aware of the fact that he is accomplishing nothing. The next step is to lead him to discover why this is so. Tentatively he must be led to formulate some reason for his failure. Perhaps it is due to his own person-

ality, or to his subject matter, or to his methods, or to something in the previous experience of the pupils which has led them to become inattentive and indifferent. The next step is to look for facts. If the facts do not fit in with one hypothesis of his failure, perhaps they will fit in with another. After a while he discovers the reason why he has been failing. He has reasoned the thing through to a right conclusion—at least he thinks it is the right conclusion. Now he tries it out. Let us say that he changes his methods of teaching because he has come to the conclusion that here was his fault. As he tries his new method, he verifies his conclusion or does not. If not, then something was wrong with his reasoning, and he must start again. If, however, he finds that now his pupils are taking an interest, he knows that he has found the right solution. And so his teaching becomes a success. In some such way people must be led to reason, to think things through to a right conclusion.

Here, then, are practical suggestions for Christian leaders who are desirous of performing their whole duty toward those who are committed to their care. It is not enough simply to hand out information—that is comparatively easy. It is necessary to help people think for themselves. This can be done by showing them, or making them aware of, vital problems of life, by moving them to try to solve these problems, and by guiding them in right ways of solving them.

### Imagination and Thinking

Another factor in the thinking process, as we have seen, is imagination. It is a very valuable factor, but it has its dangers. Imagination lies at the root of progress, inventiveness, and creative work. Scientists, artists, physicians, teachers, and all other persons who do creative work use imagination. But to be useful it must be controlled. Uncontrolled imagination is "thinking going on a spree." For example, a person can live so much in his imagination that he is oblivious of the realities of life. Here is an example:

Betty X, a girl of sixteen, used to sit and day-dream of herself as a marvelously important and effective worker for her Lord. She would sit by the hour and see herself going up and down among the poor and helping them, telling people in distant lands of the Saviour, attending

great meetings and stirring people to faith, writing books which were read eagerly by thousands, and so forth. Such dreaming might have been valuable and sent her to work to prepare herself for Christ's service; but, instead, it did nothing but waste her time. It interfered with her studies; it made her oblivious of the opportunities for service in her home, church, and community. Her imagination lacked control and got her nowhere.

There are numberless instances of things of this sort. Through their imagination people create fears, worries, sorrows, and suffering for themselves, when there is really nothing to fear or worry about. It is a part of the Christian leader's task to guide people to control their imagination and to use it to spur them on to valuable living.

Space forbids a more detailed treatment of the practical possibilities which lie at this point in the thinking process. It will be sufficient to state that Christian leaders can do much to stimulate worth-while imagination and to check unwholesome and worthless imagination. Imagination has an important place in worship, in study, in play, in work, in Christian service, in everyday living. Wise leaders will be eager to learn all they can about its place and about ways of utilizing it for worth-while ends.

### Vocabulary and Thinking

In all thinking, words play a very important part. It is almost impossible to think without the use of words. What are words? They may be called "symbols of concepts." Every word that has any meaning at all has in it a group of ideas associated together. When we say "prayer," the word brings to mind many associated ideas, such as God, talking, kneeling, asking, thanking. A word means to an individual the sum-total of his ideas associated with it, and nothing more. Therefore, to one person "God" may mean "a great big man up in the sky," while to another it may mean "a supreme spiritual Being who is holy, good, loving, just, and merciful." Five people may repeat together the same words, "I believe in Jesus Christ," and have five different thoughts as they do so. It is clear, then, that words must be used carefully and their meanings made clear; otherwise there will be confusion in thinking and, consequently, in the living which grows out of



it. Christian leaders should devote much more time to the building of their pupils' vocabulary. Unless you are sure, do not take for granted that people know what you mean by the words you use, especially by words which are not common. Explain them. Associate ideas with them. Enrich them.

Volumes have been written on the use of words. It must suffice here to say that words play a significant part in the formation of concepts, in the retention of ideas, in recall and recognition, in the use of imagination, and in the whole reasoning process. It is well nigh impossible to give too much attention to words.

To summarize: Thinking is a vital part of living. The Christian leader who would help growing persons must know how to guide the thinking which goes into the molding of their lives. He must understand how the thought process functions from the first reception of sensations to the final formation of conclusions and convictions. And, for practical purposes, he must understand particularly the relation between thinking and experience, the important place of memory in the whole thought process, the very great significance of reasoning, the function and value of imagination, and the definite contribution which an accurate and rich vocabulary makes to the development of thought. Only as the leader understands these things, can he hope efficiently and effectively to guide others into the highest areas of Christian thought and life.

## WHAT TO DO

### *My Observation Charts*

Turn to the charts which you are filling out for the two members of your group. Consider Section IV, which deals with thought characteristics. Fill out the chart to the best of your ability.

Select also *one* of the following and carry out its suggestions:

### *The Use of Vocabulary in My Group*

Examine carefully the study and worship materials used in your group—books, quarterlies, hymnals, etc.—and study the words used. Ask yourself: Are these words within the comprehension of my group? If not, how can I make them so? Are they utterly beyond the experience of my group? Then what should I do? Summarize your conclusions in writing.

### *The Thinking of My Group*

Consider your procedure with your group. Does your method stimulate thinking on the part of the members of your group? If not, what changes should you make in your procedure? If your procedure seems satisfactory in general, but still your pupils do not do much thinking, then what can you do to move them to think? Summarize your conclusions in writing.

### *Memory Work in My Group*

What kind of memory work do you do in your group? Are the pupils interested in it? Do they take delight in doing it? If not, what may be the reasons? Think your own problem through and try to discover some improvements which you can make in the way you handle memory work in your group. Summarize your conclusion in writing.

### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Gift, F. U. *Handbook of Psychology*, 1933, pp. 31-63.

Mudge, E. L. *Our Pupils*, 1930, pp. 53-68, 88-120.

Norlie, O. M. *An Elementary Christian Psychology*, 1924, pp. 79-116.

Powell, W. E. *The Growth of Christian Personality*, 1929, pp. 92-146.

Reu, M. *Catechetics*, 1927, pp. 203-218.

Woodworth, R. S. *Psychology*, 1934, pp. 418-487.

## CHAPTER VI

# WE BELIEVE

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

It is human nature to grow, to feel, to think. So, too, it is to believe, to have faith. Believing plays an important part in man's life. As you read this chapter, try to find answers to these questions.

1. What part does faith play in human life?
2. How is faith built up?
3. What is the relation between faith and feeling, between faith and knowledge, and between faith and thought?
4. Is there anything distinctive about Christian faith? If so, what is it?
5. What are some of the practical values of this study?

Believing is as characteristic of human nature as are growing, feeling, knowing, and thinking. Believing is a process, just as feeling or thinking is a process. It is not an independent process any more than they are. As we shall see later, it is a process in which feeling, knowing, and thinking play a very definite part.

The product of the process of believing is called "belief," or "faith." The two words are not quite synonymous; each has an emphasis, a flavor, of its own. Belief emphasizes particularly the intellectual element that results from the process of believing; faith emphasizes particularly the emotional element.

The process of believing is found almost everywhere in man's life. We speak of men believing that it will rain or that the stock market will rise. We speak, too, of men believing certain facts and truths. Again, we speak of persons believing in certain theories, forms of government, or people. Further, we speak of people as believing in God. Believing, then, has a wide range of meaning and of application. Let us consider, first, its range of application.

Underlying most of life and its relationships there is an element of faith. We can scarcely conceive of life without it. The family relationship is built on it. Business and industry would crumble were employers and employees to have no faith in each other, were customers to have no faith in the products of industry, were no one to have faith in the methods

and values of business. Government would be next to impossible. Science itself could make no progress without faith, for it must believe in the orderliness of nature, in the possibility of discovering nature's laws, in the workability of hypothesis, and in a hundred other things. And the same is true of finance, art, education, and religion. Anyone who observes carefully and who thinks about what he observes, will find a thousand instances of faith every day. Believing, with its products of belief and faith, is an almost universal factor in human life.

Exactly what do we mean by the term "believing" and by its related terms "beliefs" and "faith"? All three are used in a variety of meanings. Sometimes they are used to mean little more than an opinion, a notion, a feeling; for example, in the sentence, "John believes he is catching a cold." Again, they are used to mean the tentative acceptance of something, as in the sentence, "I believe you may be right about this." Or, they may mean definite assent to a proposition: "Most scientists believe in evolution." Or, they may express an attitude of confidence: "We believe in the American form of government." Or, they may denote absolute allegiance and devotion: "I believe in Jesus Christ." It is evident, then, that the words are used with different meanings, or at least with a wide range of related meanings. Before we can consider the process by which faith is built up in an individual's soul, we must know what we mean by the terms we are using. What, then, is faith? What does "to believe" mean?

### The Meaning and Nature of Faith

In its truest meaning, faith is confidence, trust. Underlying all the various meanings of faith, there seems to be this one common element. The amount of confidence may be very limited indeed, but there is always a little of it present. For example, even in the sentence, "John believes that he is catching a cold," there is in John an inner feeling of confidence that he is correctly diagnosing certain symptoms. When someone says, "I believe you may be right about this," there is a degree, no matter how limited, of confidence. And when faith comes to mean absolute allegiance and devotion, confidence has reached its highest point. Basically, then, faith is confidence.

The process of believing, accordingly, is the process by which and in which confidence is built up. This process is primarily a spiritual thing—something that takes place in man's soul. But, like everything else in human life, it has a relation to man's physical self; for here, as elsewhere, man is a unit—a body and a soul working co-operatively. In other words, the process of believing is a process in which man's spiritual equipment and his physical equipment are both utilized. That there is such a relationship between body and soul in the process of believing may be seen by observing what actually happens in life:

A young woman is deeply in love with a young man. Through the years her confidence in him has grown. When she sees him—even when she thinks of him—she is aware of physical strengthening. Her heart beats faster, her eyes sparkle, her body seems to be aglow. Then suddenly her confidence in him is completely shattered by something which she has discovered about him. Her body slumps, her eyes become dull, her nervous system is wrecked, and she becomes physically ill.

Evidently, believing has an effect upon the body. So, too, the body has an effect on believing:

A middle-aged man, who has never known a day of physical suffering in his life, suddenly becomes critically ill. He has always had an abundance of confidence in the world, in himself, in his fellowmen, in God. But now, under the strain of long, serious illness, life looks different. He begins to lose confidence in himself. He wonders about life in general. He cannot understand God's ways and begins to have misgivings and doubts. Even his complete confidence in his dearly loved wife is appreciably weakened, and sometimes he wonders whether she is doing everything she could do to help him. Gradually, under careful treatment, physical strength begins to return. Week after week there is progress. And slowly, as physical recovery comes, confidence returns.

Evidently, a man's physical condition may have a bearing upon his faith. The two, body and soul, both play a part in the process of believing. Primarily, however, as has been said, believing is a spiritual process.

### The Process of Building Up Faith

How is faith built up? Let us consider a typical example of everyday faith:

A new pastor is sent by the president of synod to supply a vacant congregation. He is entirely unknown to the congregation; not a member has ever heard of him. Their attitude toward him is, therefore, neutral.

As he enters the church, all fix their attention upon him. Immediately, at his first appearance, he makes some impression—let us say a favorable one. His appearance, his manner, his voice all contribute to the favorable impression. There is a general feeling of satisfaction. As he conducts the service, preaches his sermon, and greets the people, the general impression is increased. The congregation forms an idea of him. As the weeks and months come and go, he continues to make a multitude of impressions. The feeling of satisfaction grows. Emergencies of various kinds arise, and the pastor meets them with tact, wisdom, and sympathy. He helps people in a multitude of troubles, and helps them effectively. Further, the church council has meanwhile been engaged in finding out about his past, and all their reports are good. These things all add to the feeling of satisfaction. Gradually the various impressions are associated into a fairly complete mental picture of what he is like; the congregation knows him now, and they know that he is the kind of man who can be trusted. In many ways they have been thinking about him—about what he would do in this case and that, about how he would act under different situations. They begin to form judgments concerning him, and find that their judgments are favorable ones. After taking all their experiences, impressions, ideas, feelings, thoughts, and judgments together, they conclude that he is the man they want to be their pastor; they have confidence in him; they trust him.

Without attempting to examine scientifically all the steps which led to the development of faith, what, in general, was the process by which the faith of this congregation was built up?

In the first place, the congregation received a series of impressions of the pastor, all of which came from the pastor himself. Some of them came directly; others indirectly through other persons who had known him. Thus the congregation learned to know him.

In the second place, the congregation associated these ideas which they formed of him with other ideas which they already had—ideas of what constituted a good pastor. Since their ideas of him fitted in with their ideas of a good pastor, they felt that he would make a good pastor for them.

In the third place, the congregation formed a mental picture of him in relation to themselves and to the work which he would have to do in their church and community. They thought about him, formed judgments concerning him, and finally came to the conclusion that he was the man they wanted.

Their knowledge of him, plus their feelings about him, plus their thinking, gradually built up confidence in him. In other words, faith grew out of the total of their experience—their own immediate experience and also that of others.

In this general way all faith is built up, whether it be faith in a fact, a truth, a theory, a person, or anything else. Always there is knowledge, feeling, thinking. In some cases one of these elements may almost completely dominate, but a certain degree of the other two is sure to be present. And all three of these—let it be repeated—come from experience, either directly or indirectly.

Exactly the same elements and exactly the same process are utilized in the building of natural religious faith. Were we to examine into the faith of worshipers of Buddha, for example, we should find underlying it a vast number of experiences in each of which knowledge, feeling, and thought have had a part. We might conclude that the knowledge was inaccurate or very fragmentary, that the feelings were warped or inadequate, that the thinking that had been done was too limited or unsound, and that, consequently, their religious faith is unsound or inadequate; but we should have to admit, nevertheless, that it is a faith which has been built up as all human faith is.

### The Development of Christian Faith

The question will at once arise: What about Christian faith? Is it developed in the same way? Does it have in it the same elements? The answer is: Yes. But there is a factor in Christian faith which differentiates it from other faith. That factor, however, lies neither in the nature of the process nor in the constituent elements of faith—as we shall see. Since this matter of Christian faith is of primary importance to Christian leaders, let us examine it at some length.

In Chapter II it was stated that human beings are born with a religious capacity, but, so far as scientists can determine, without a distinctive religious drive, or urge. This fact was there accounted for as follows: According to Scripture, man was created in the image of God—that is, with spiritual endowments. Among these endowments was an inner drive toward God—a something which made it possible for man to know God and to fellowship with him. When man sinned, he lost, among other things, this Godward urge. But the capacity for God was not lost. Had man lost the capacity as well as the instinct, he would forever have been without the possibility of knowing, trusting

in, and communing with, God. It must be maintained, then, that the capacity for God remained, and that men have it still.

This capacity needs to be stimulated if faith is to be aroused, for a capacity has no power to stimulate itself. In natural religions, it is stimulated by objects of nature, by events in history, by ideas whether real or imagined, by the personality of magnetic characters, by memories of departed ones, and by many other things. Accordingly, the impressions made on believers in these religions are at best impressions got not from God, but from his creation. To the extent that God's creation still expresses him accurately, these impressions are true; but to the extent that it does not, they are not true. Therefore, there is a measure of error and inadequacy in natural religions from the moment of their inception. The situation becomes even worse as sinful man builds up his faith upon the erroneous and inadequate foundations, for not only is his fundamental knowledge inaccurate and insufficient, but his emotional and his thought processes are, partly at least, vitiated by sin. If faith is to be genuine, then, the original capacity for God must be stimulated by God himself.

In the Christian religion this is held to be imperative. According to it, man must be "reborn"—that is, in psychological language, stimulated by God. The Bible teaches that the Godward life is impossible without this rebirth. It reveals the fact that God the Holy Spirit himself produces this rebirth alone by his divine power. While in all other faith the stimulus comes from some natural cause, in distinctly Christian faith the stimulus comes from a supernatural cause. Here is the first distinctive thing about Christian faith: its stimulus is God himself.

The elements which constitute Christian faith are the same as those in any other kind of faith—knowledge, feeling, thought. But in each of these, again, there is something truly distinctive. In natural religions, for example, knowledge is built up entirely from what man can learn in a natural way. In the Christian religion, however, knowledge is based upon what God himself has revealed to man. Therefore the Scriptures speak repeatedly of the Word of God and of its divine power. Therefore, too, the church holds that the Word of God is the ultimate standard by which all religious truth is to be measured. Here is the second



distinctive thing about Christian faith: its knowledge element rests upon and is directed by God's revealed truth.

In natural religions feelings are aroused and directed by natural causes. These natural causes, of course, play a part in the Christian religion; but in Christian faith its feeling elements are stimulated also by the divine forces which are present: by the Holy Spirit, by the Word of God, and by those specialized forms of the Word which we call "the sacraments." When, for example, Paul writes, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," he is simply expressing the fact that all the emotional qualities and products of Christian believing are the natural outgrowth of the supernatural presence of God himself. Here is the third distinctive thing about Christian faith: its feeling element is stimulated and directed by God's own presence.

The same is true also of the thought element in the Christian religion. Undoubtedly the persons who originally received God's revelation did their own thinking. This is certainly evidenced by the fact that various parts of Scripture are written in various styles and thought forms, and that widely varied view-points are presented. For example, no one will question that Paul and James thought differently. But here again, as in the matter of knowledge and feeling, there is evidence that the thinking processes of those who received and transmitted God's revelation were influenced by a divine factor. The Holy Spirit led them into truth. Abundant confirmation of this may be had both from Scripture and from the experience of the Christian Church. This is the fourth distinctive thing about Christian faith: its thought element is influenced by God himself.

These four distinctive elements are in the last analysis merely four aspects of a single truth. This truth is that in Christian faith God plays a vital part from beginning to end. It is he who stimulates our faith; it is he who directs it; it is he who consummates it. Or, putting it differently, God is in the beginning, middle, and end of our Christian experience. To the extent that we respond to his presence, truth, and power, our faith is true and adequate; to the extent that we do not, our faith is faulty and inadequate, and in need of further stimulation, guidance, and help.

## Practical Values for the Christian Leader

Of what practical value is such a study of the believing process? How can it help Christian leaders in their practical work with their groups and with individual members of these groups?

The ultimate purpose of all Christian work is the building of Christian life. Christian life is the outgrowth of Christian faith. The best way—perhaps the only way—to build up Christian life in our boys and girls, our men and women, is to help them build up a personal faith which is both true and adequate. We have seen how this is done. It may prove helpful, however, to select items of particular significance and give them a very practical application.

1. *Faith and the Physical.* It has been pointed out that faith affects and is affected by physical factors. Here is another reason why leaders and teachers should give attention to such physical matters as room, sunshine, ventilation, comfortable and pleasant surroundings, rest periods, and the personal health of members of the group.

2. *Faith and Experience.* It has been stated that faith grows out of experience, either immediate personal experience or the experience of others brought to us for our learning. It is, accordingly, the Christian leader's task to guide his group and its individual members into such experiences as will build up a true and adequate faith, and to help his group understand the faith experiences of other persons.

Consider the former—the matter of leading persons into faith-building experiences. Christian leaders can provide worship situations which are truly worshipful; they can lead their group to participate in the services of the congregation; they can sense moments in the midst of study, work, and fellowship, when worship would be natural, and make use of such moments for experiencing God's presence; they can interpret life experiences in terms of God and thus help to nurture and guide faith.

Consider the latter—the matter of helping persons to learn through the faith experiences of others. Christian leaders, in discussing Biblical characters and Christian heroes, can point out how their experiences led to faith, how this faith showed itself, how it furthered life; or, if the characters lacked faith,

leaders can point out how this affected their lives. With the help of a bit of imagination, persons can be led to put themselves in the place of others and thus experience vicariously those others' experiences of God. Further, Christian leaders can themselves show a living Christian faith and thus lead the members of their groups to experience the power and value of faith. The possibilities along this line are many.

3. *Faith and Knowledge.* As we have seen, faith has a knowledge factor, which is of vital importance. The only true and adequate faith rests upon the Word of God, the record of which we possess in the Bible. Here is a practical thought: Christian leaders, if they would develop the faith of their group, must lead their group to know, understand, and appreciate divinely revealed truth. Wrong conceptions of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of man, of salvation, and so forth, must be corrected; right conceptions must be developed, strengthened, perfected.

4. *Faith and Feeling.* Feeling plays an important part in faith. It is essential that right feelings accompany right knowledge. Right feelings are the result of right stimuli and of right associations. Accordingly, Christian leaders must do all in their power to make use only of such things, in worship, study, work, and recreation, as will be creative of truly Christian feelings. Great care must be taken to avoid anything and everything which will stimulate emotions which are not Christian. Prayer for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit will do much to develop feelings which are in harmony with Christian faith.

5. *Faith and Thought.* If faith is to be intelligent, there must be thought in it; and this thought must be Spirit-guided. Christian leaders who are in earnest in their endeavor to help others build up a truly Christian faith will, therefore, endeavor to get them to think—to form right concepts, and judgments, and reasons. There must, consequently, be opportunity for discussion, freedom of expression, careful examination of opinions, thorough study of Christian truths and principles, sympathetic guidance, and a prayerful attitude. Only in this way can persons be brought to personal, intelligent faith. And here again the promptings of the Spirit must be discerned and heeded.

These are a few—a very few—of the practical values which grow out of a study of the process of believing. Christian

leaders can make much of them in their work with their classes and other church groups, and with individuals.

### WHAT TO DO

#### *My Observation Charts*

Consider Section V of the chart. This section, as you will notice, deals with faith. Endeavor to ascertain what you can about the faith of the persons whom you are particularly studying. Enter any findings of value in the charts.

#### *A Practical Experiment*

Consider the worship experiences of your class or group. Think of the room and equipment. Are they conducive to worship? If not, what can you do to make them so? Think of the form of worship—the kind of service you use. Is it conducive to real worship experiences? If not, what improvements can you suggest? Think of the attitudes of the leaders, of yourself, of your group members. Are these attitudes conducive to genuine worship? If not, what can be done to make them so? Try out, in co-operation with all concerned, at least a few changes which you feel will be helpful. This is one way of helping to build up Christian faith in your group.

### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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## CHAPTER VII

# WE BUILD IDEALS

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

Closely related to the process of believing is the process by which human beings build ideals. In many respects the two are one. Since, however, ideals play an important part in life, especially in Christian life, it may be well to devote some thought to a study of them. As you read this chapter, try to find out:

1. What ideals are;
2. How ideals are built up;
3. What their value is for life.

We are not born with ideals, any more than we are born with thoughts or beliefs. They are the product of learning. Before considering how ideals are developed, let us ask ourselves: What do we mean by "ideal"?

### The Meaning of "Ideal"

We speak of an ideal person, thing, place, law; of an ideal of beauty, government, character, family life; of ideals in business, politics, morals, religion; of persons having ideals, being untrue to their ideals, living up to their ideals, realizing their ideals. What do we mean? What is an "ideal"?

Putting it as simply as possible, an ideal is a perfect type of anything. An ideal person is, then, a perfect person—one who measures up to the standard of perfection for persons. An ideal family life is the perfection of family life. Reverence is an ideal in religion, because any perfect religion will most certainly include it among its essential characteristics. Putting the matter somewhat differently, we may say: An ideal is the mental picture of anything *as it should be*. It is this "as it should be" that distinguishes an ideal from an idea. An idea is the mental picture of anything as it is; an ideal, to repeat, is the mental picture of anything as it should be.

When, however, we speak of ideals in relation to living, the term "ideal" takes on a somewhat larger and richer meaning. It then means not only the mental picture of the perfect type, but

that mental picture viewed as a goal of achievement. For example, the character of Jesus Christ is the Christian's ideal of character; it is the perfect type, the standard, the fundamental pattern. But the character of Jesus is something more than these; it is the Christian's personal goal. There is something in the character of Jesus that produces more than a mental picture of perfect character; there is something that stirs the feelings, that awakens desire, that kindles purpose, that leads to determination, that moves to action. And the same is true of any other ideal which is related to living. An ideal, then, may be described—at least in so far as it relates to life—as a mental picture that is strong enough to stir the feelings, to awaken the desire, to kindle the purpose, to lead to the determination, and to move to the action, that will seek to make that mental picture a reality in life.

Perhaps an illustration will be of service in making this a bit clearer:

A young medical student has read a biography of David Livingstone. It has made a deep impression on him. He has been gripped by the life of this great Christian leader. But why? What is there in Livingstone's life that can stir him so? The student begins to think. Gradually the idea of Livingstone's self-sacrifice emerges. It is this that has gripped him. But, again, why? The student recalls other examples of self-sacrifice—the self-sacrifice of his parents, of other men and women whom he has known or read about, of Jesus Christ. He thinks about all these. Slowly there forms in his mind a picture of self-sacrifice. He sees that this is what life should be like; it should be characterized by self-sacrifice. Yes, his own life should be like that. It is not like that now; it is characterized by desire for position, power, wealth, and glory. But now—no, these must govern his life no longer. Self-sacrifice must now take their place. As he keeps this mental picture before him, his feelings are stirred; he feels keenly how all-important it is that he live a life of selfless service. His thoughts and feelings lead to a desire to live this kind of life. His desire gradually ripens into a purpose. He is determined to live it. And immediately he sets out to make changes in his life in order that he may achieve this goal which he has set himself. He has an ideal—the ideal of self-sacrifice.

From what has been said, and particularly from the foregoing example, it will be seen that ideals are made up of many different factors; of sensations, ideas, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, choices, determinations. Indeed, it will not be going too far to say that in a man's highest ideals the whole man plays a part.

## The Development and Realization of Ideals

Ideals, if they themselves were what they should be, would always be good, valuable, and helpful. Unfortunately this is by no means the case. People's ideas of what things should be, do not always correspond with what they really should be. In other words, it not infrequently happens that people have low, wrong, worthless, or harmful ideals. The first step in developing, or building up, ideals is, therefore, the ascertaining of what ideals are good, wholesome, helpful. For Christians the standard is, here as elsewhere, the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ. He is the determining factor in the selection of ideals for living. Those ideals which are in harmony with his person, life, teaching, purpose, and spirit are good; others are not. Among the good will be included such ideals as these: complete trust in God, love for God and man, loyalty to Christ, devotion to his kingdom, living one's best, service to others, and thousands more.

The second step in the development of ideals is the formation of mental pictures of those ideals which are in harmony with the mind and spirit of Christ. The leader can be of great service at this point. He can contribute considerably to the right formation of these mental pictures by personally exemplifying Christian ideals, by telling stories which embody these ideals, by helping the members of his group recall examples of them, and by leading his pupils into personal experiences in which these ideals have a part. If these mental pictures are to become the foundation of genuine ideals, they must be clear, vivid, strong. It is essential, therefore, that interest be maintained and that attention be definitely focused upon what is being learned; for where there is no interest and no attention there will be no development of life-controlling mental pictures.

But even clear, vivid, and strong mental pictures are not enough. Feelings must be aroused. The leader's example, teachings, and work with his group must be of such kind as to stir their emotions. In others words, the mental pictures must be made to live. There must be warmth, enthusiasm, a feeling of worthwhileness. So deeply must the emotions be stirred that there is born a genuine desire to accept and follow the ideal.

Thinking, too, must play a part in the development of ideals; otherwise they will not be intelligent ideals. The mental pictures

and their accompanying feelings must be analyzed. The ideal must be carefully scrutinized. Its value must be determined. And each ideal must be seen in relation to other ideals. Judgments must be formed, and frequently choices must be made.

It is in some such way as this that ideals are developed. But now it is imperative that these developed ideals be realized in life, or, at least, that an effort be made to realize them; for ideals which are not striven for soon fade and eventually perish. They must be kept alive, and they must be kept focused upon actual living. It is possible to keep ideals alive without reference to living, by a kind of artificial stimulation. It is quite possible to keep the mental pictures vivid and the feelings aroused without accomplishing anything of real value for life. Indeed, it is possible to do much harm by this artificial stimulation; for a person who has an ideal, but who does nothing to live it, may develop a dual or split personality—always a dangerous, and usually a harmful, thing. Ideals, then, must be kept alive in relation to life itself; they must be striven for; they must be lived.

If they are to be striven for in life, two additional steps must be taken: (1) the will must be set in motion, and (2) there must be action. Consider the illustration of the young medical student who had become so deeply impressed with the life of Livingstone. He had formed mental pictures of self-sacrifice; he had felt the emotional appeal of these pictures; he had thought about the value of self-sacrifice; he had formed an ideal. Had he stopped at this point, however, little, if anything, of practical value would have been achieved. But he did not stop there. He determined to realize this ideal in his own life. And then, when he had willed it, he set out to make changes in his life in order that he might realize this goal which he had set himself. Will and action are essential to the realization of ideals. Let us examine these two steps in somewhat more detail:

1. *The Will.* The will is the whole self engaged in making a decision and in determining to carry it out. Scholars have traced a number of contributory elements in the process of willing: desire, thought, choice, and determined purpose to the point of action. If persons are not only to form ideals, but also to attempt their realization, they must be led to the point where they definitely will to strive for their attainment.



A desire must be created—a desire to live the ideal. While this is being accomplished, other desires will no doubt present themselves. When the medical student, for example, was planning to follow his new ideal, his former desires—for position, power, wealth, glory—presented themselves to him and asked for consideration. He was compelled, therefore, to think and to make a choice. And so it is in the realization of any ideal. A choice must be made. If the right desire is to be followed, it must be more appealing and more compelling than all other desires. In other words, the choice will depend upon how vivid and strong the ideal has become. When the choice has been made, it must be converted into a purpose, which is nothing more than a continued choice. And finally this purpose must lead to definite action. Consider a concrete illustration:

A teacher of Intermediate boys had found a very definite lack of class spirit in his group. He determined that something must be done about it; that these boys must be led to a sense of loyalty and co-operation. He believed this to be in harmony with the mind and spirit of Christ. So he began to build up the ideal. Loyalty and co-operation were pictured in stories; feelings were aroused; discussions took place. The members began to appreciate the value of this ideal. Before long every member of the class had an inner picture of what their class should be like. But—there were other desires: the desire for fun, the desire to go out with other boys on Sunday morning at Sunday school time, the desire to dominate, or to show off, or to attract attention to self. The teacher considered these various desires with his group, led them to see what each led to, led them to see what loyalty and co-operation might lead to, and then let the group make its choice. The choice was made as the teacher had hoped it might be. But it was not easy to keep this choice operative. Week after week the choice had to be renewed until it became the fixed purpose of the group to show loyalty and co-operation. It required constant motivation and stimulation. Then, as the choice ripened into a purpose, the class set to work to prepare their own rules of behavior. They were at last at the point of carrying their ideal into action.

2. *The Act.* As has been said, the ideal must not only be formed and willed; it must be carried out in living. If this is to be done, there must be opportunities for carrying it out. To revert to the illustration just considered: If the teacher had led the boys to the point where they formulated their rules and then had asked the class to put them aside or had insisted on the class following his own rules, there would never have developed a class spirit of loyalty and co-operation. In other

words, the pupils' own ideals must be given an opportunity to find expression. If these are not what they should be, the pupils must be led to a development of higher ideals; but, when once reached and purposed, an ideal must be acted upon.

In the next chapter, we shall consider more fully how human beings act; it will suffice at this point to state once more that ideals are intended to result in action.

### The Value of Ideals

It has already been pointed out that ideals have value for life. What, more specifically, do they accomplish? A few of the major values are here considered.

1. *Ideals and Character Development.* Character is the sum-total of a person's acquired traits and habits. It is not present at birth; it is developed. Into this development go all a man's impressions, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, ideals, decisions, and acts. In this development ideals have a place—an important place.

One of the tasks of Christian leaders is to help people develop Christlike character—that is, character having the traits of our Lord's character. How can this be accomplished unless the ideals of his life are held up before people, unless they see and feel the beauty and worth and power of them, unless they are led to make them their own ideals, unless they are given an opportunity—many opportunities—to put them into practice? Christlike character can be acquired in no other way. Of course, the divine help of the Holy Spirit is essential, but we are assured of his help whenever and wherever we endeavor to make Jesus Christ an integral part of men's lives.

2. *Ideals and Conduct.* Conduct is behavior—the way one acts. It has already been stated that ideals, if properly motivated, lead to action.

To guide people's conduct, or, rather, to help them control and guide their own, is another responsibility of Christian leaders. What is to be the standard of human conduct? What is to be its ideal? Many different ones have been suggested in the course of history and are still being suggested today: tradition, social custom, the laws of the land, natural ethical standards, ecclesiastical precepts, to mention but a few. Are these the highest

ideals possible? The Christian religion offers as its ideal the perfection of God himself: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This perfection is expressed more definitely and concretely in the revealed will of God. The doing of God's will, therefore, becomes the Christian's ideal of conduct. How is his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, unless his will is made known and is accepted as man's ideal?

Christian leaders have certainly an obligation in this regard. They are to help persons to live godly lives. They are in duty bound, therefore, to make God's will known, to arouse in their followers a deep desire and a determined purpose to live in accordance with it, and to give them an opportunity—many opportunities—actually to do so. From childhood to old age people must be led into an ever fuller understanding of the will of God and into an ever increasing determination to realize the ideal of doing God's will in their own lives.

3. *Ideals and Social Progress.* We are living in a time when there is large emphasis upon the social aspects of life. The development of a better society is for many Christians the center of interest, enthusiasm, and devotion. Many evidences to the contrary, some progress has been made and is being made. Few of us, did we know all the facts, would want to live in any former age. How has this progress been made? Has it been by an automatic evolution? Those who know history know that this is not true. Though many factors have undoubtedly entered into the making of social progress, none has played a more important role than have ideals. Without ideals, as without faith, there is little social progress, if any. The world has moved in the past, and is moving today, along the line of great social ideals.

Consider, for example, the ideal of a warless world. It is certainly not being realized automatically. There are perhaps more forces against it than there are for it. What progress is being made is being made because here and there individuals and groups have given themselves to the realization of this ideal. And so it is with other aspects of social progress.

Here again Christian leaders have a definite responsibility. It is a part of their work to make a contribution to social progress. How can they do it except by firing others with high ideals of social life—family, business, economic, political, national, and

international life? But where are Christian leaders to discover these ideals? Again the answer is: in God, in Christ, in the will of God, in the kingdom of God. It is only as boys and girls, and men and women, are led to see, accept, and follow the social ideals of the Gospel that true and lasting progress in society can be made.

4. *Ideals and the Spiritual Life.* The term "spiritual life" is used in a broader and in a narrower sense. In its broader sense it means the whole soul life of man, and includes such things as philosophy, art, morality, and religion. In its narrower sense it means the life of man with God. In both meanings, spiritual life is influenced by ideals. What a philosopher thinks is modified by his personal ideals. What an artist creates is to some extent the expression of his ideals. The kind of life a person lives morally, is determined in no small measure by his moral ideals. This is even more true in the sphere of religion; for religion is, generally speaking, grounded in ideals.

In the realm of spiritual life, in its narrower sense, of life with God, ideals play a large role. Through the ages, Christian life with God has assumed many different forms. At times this life has been largely mystical; at other times, largely intellectual; again, largely formal and ritualistic; and so forth. Why these different expressions of the same underlying faith? The answer is that men's ideals of fellowship with God have varied at different times and in different individuals. They will probably continue to do so to the end of time. The important consideration now is that ideals determine to no small degree the form of expression of man's spiritual life.

Certainly a part of every Christian leader's work is to help the members of his group to nurture their spiritual life. Accordingly, he must be able to lead his group into the discovery of spiritual ideals which are in harmony with the mind and spirit of Christ. Here such ideals as reverence, humility, repentance, faith, devotion, daily communion with God, personal Bible reading, participation in public worship, participation in the Lord's Supper, and the like, need to be built up. Only as this is done can spiritual life be expanded, enriched, deepened.

We have seen that ideals are significant in character building, in conduct control, in social progress, and in spiritual life, particularly in life in fellowship with God. No effort should be

spared in the attempt to develop these ideals and to make them dominant in the lives of those committed to our care.

A word needs to be added relative to the development of these ideals in different age-groups. It is not to be expected that all Christian ideals can be built up at one time. The process is a lifelong process, and requires much patience and wisdom. A beginning can be made in the home and in the Nursery department. The ideals chosen must be those which come within the comprehension and experience of the child, and they must be built up through examples, stories, hymns, prayers, Bible verses, and activities which are within his capacity. As the child grows into larger experiences, other ideals may be added and other materials used. In every period the interests, needs, and abilities of the group must be taken into definite consideration.

### WHAT TO DO

#### *My Observation Charts*

Continue work on your charts, giving particular attention to Section VI.

#### *An Experiment in Building Up an Ideal*

Think of your group. Is there something that needs to be built up in its life? Select something not too difficult of accomplishment, such as, punctuality, regularity of attendance, attendance upon church services, cleanliness and neatness, participation in discussions. What ideal will help to accomplish what you desire to accomplish? How can this ideal be presented so that it can be understood by the members of your group? What helps can be used to build up this ideal? How can you arouse the group's feelings? How can you lead them to think about the ideal in relation to the life of the group? How can you lead them to the right conclusion without forcing your ideal upon them? What can you do to get them to try to realize their own ideal? Think this whole matter through. Make your plans. Try them out. What are the results?

### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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## CHAPTER VIII

### WE ACT

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

No proof is needed to show that it is human nature to act. Life is, to a large extent, a long series of actions. In preceding chapters, actions have already been considered in connection with our study of growth, emotions, beliefs, and ideals. Nevertheless, it may prove helpful to consider somewhat more systematically this whole matter of human activity. As you read this chapter, endeavor to find out:

1. What is meant by the term "action";
2. How actions may be classified;
3. What kinds of actions are most desirable in Christian life;
4. How actions can be controlled and guided.

Human beings act. The newborn infant almost immediately after birth moves his little limbs. A barefooted child steps upon a sharp stone and at once pulls up his leg. A lad rushes into the house, sits down to the table, and quickly devours his meal, while his mind is intent upon the ball game that is to be played after lunch. A Junior class is in the midst of worship when suddenly one member strikes another on the back of the head. A young lady, dressed her loveliest, sits at the piano before the Young People's meeting and plays and sings the latest popular songs. A Sunday school teacher leaves pressing work and visits a member of her class who is critically sick and who needs her inspiration. All these are actions. No two of them are alike, and yet they have this in common: in all of them, persons are doing something; they are acting.

The word "action," like many other words, is used in a variety of meanings. In a narrow sense the term may be limited to those things which are done outwardly, consciously, and voluntarily. But this use seems unnecessarily to restrict it. In its broadest sense an action is any movement or any exertion of energy, whether internal or external, conscious or unconscious, voluntary or involuntary. It is in this sense that the word is used in this text. However, no consideration will here be given to internal actions, such as the beating of the heart, the contrac-

tions of the intestinal walls, and the functioning of glands. Our only interest is with external actions, with outward behavior.

Actions have been variously classified. The exact classification is of little practical significance, provided the different kinds of actions are understood. For convenience we shall classify them (1) according to their inherent nature, (2) according to their practical value, and (3) according to their moral quality.

### The Inherent Nature of Actions

According to their inherent nature, actions may be classified either as involuntary (automatic) or as voluntary (purposive).

1. *Involuntary Actions.* By this is meant all actions which are not the result of the person's willing them. An examination of involuntary actions reveals a number of different kinds.

In the first place, there are actions which are *due to inherited tendencies*. The baby's first motion is an example. Apparently certain nerve connections and nerve paths already exist at birth. These seem to function automatically, spontaneously, instinctively. There is no deliberation, no choice, no will; and therefore the action is involuntary.

In the second place, there are actions which are *reflex*. The child's instantaneous withdrawal of his foot from a sharp stone is an example. This kind of action, strictly speaking, is not due to an inherited tendency. It is due to a nerve connection made between a sensory and a motor nerve. The nerve current started by the sharp stone is carried directly to the motor nerve without going to the brain, or with only a part of it going to the brain. When the current does not reach the brain at all, the person is entirely unconscious of the action; when a part of it reaches the brain, the person is conscious of it. Here again, as in the case of actions due to inherited tendencies, there is no deliberation, no choice, no will; the action is involuntary.

In the third place, there are actions which are *habitual*—the result of habits. A habit is a fixed tendency to do something in a certain way. Most habits begin with conscious acts, and sometimes with carefully reasoned acts; but in the course of time, if the same act is frequently repeated in the same way, a definite path is built in the nervous system, which enables the action to take place without the individual's willing it, and often with-

out his being conscious of it. It is then a habit. The hurried eating by the boy who was intent upon getting to his ball game is an example. When that boy was a little child, first beginning to learn to eat, almost every act in the process of eating was a conscious one, requiring attention; but in the course of time these acts became "second nature"; that is, his action became habitual. When the lad had finished his meal, he probably could not have told whether he had eaten one thing or another, whether he had used a spoon or a fork, whether he had eaten much or little. He was eating without being aware of the fact that he was doing so. When habits are fully formed, there is no deliberation, no choice, no will; the action is involuntary.

2. *Voluntary Actions.* By this is meant all actions which are the result of a person's willing them. An examination of these reveals, perhaps not different kinds, but certainly different levels.

In the first place, there are actions which are the result of *impulse*. The action of the Junior who struck another during the worship service is an example. There may have been no particular desire to do it and no reason for it. He did not really think at all; he just acted on an impulse. And yet there was a degree of will in it, for the action was not due to an inherited tendency, nor to a reflex, nor to a habit. To the extent that there was volition, no matter how limited, the act was voluntary.

In the second place, there are actions which are born of *desire*—for example, the actions of the young lady who dressed attractively, came early to meetings, and played and sang popular songs. Underlying these actions was a desire to be popular with the group. Such actions differ from impulsive actions in that they are prompted by thought as well as feelings. There is purpose behind them. They, too, are voluntary actions; and since there is more thought and will in them than in impulsive actions, they may be said to represent a higher type of action.

In the third place, there are actions which result from *reasoned conviction*. Such are actions which are born of faith and of ideals. Behind them lie thoughts, feelings, reasons, and real determination of the will. The teacher's giving up other pressing work to visit the sick member of her class is an example. Not only did she feel that she ought to go, but she reasoned the situation through—compared the importance of her other work



with the importance of this visit, thought through both sides, came to a conclusion, and then determined to make the visit. Her action was voluntary; and, since there was not only feeling and desire, but also reasoned thought and determined will, it may be said that her action was of even a higher type than that of the young lady who acted merely from desire.

It is not difficult to see that voluntary action is of a higher type than involuntary, and that within the voluntary group reasoned action is of a higher type than action which grows out of a momentary impulse or out of a mere desire. This does not mean that a voluntary action is more valuable than an involuntary one, for this is frequently not the case; it means simply that a voluntary action has more of a person's whole self in it than has an involuntary one. To illustrate, certainly the teacher's visit to the sick member of her class is a higher type of action than the baby's first movement of arm or leg; for in the baby's motion there is nothing but an instinct, while in the teacher's action there is feeling, thought, desire, purpose, reason, and will.

### The Practical Value of Actions

It has just been suggested that the value of an action is independent of the kind of action which it is; that is to say, a reflex action may be more valuable under certain circumstances than a reasoned one. For example, when a person touches a hot stove, an instantaneous reflex will do him more good than an hour's reasoning, for the reflex will get his hand away before it is badly burned, while, if he waits for his reason to determine what to do, he may find his hand in a pitiable state before he is ready to act. Or, to use another illustration, a habitual action may be of more practical value than a reasoned one, though the reasoned one is of a higher type. For example, a person may pray from habit and get practical benefits from it, while, if he waits until he has reasoned out every problem connected with prayer, he may never pray, and so lose its benefits. This point should be clearly grasped: the practical value of an action is not dependent upon its inherent nature.

However, given two actions of exactly the same practical value for life, the one which is voluntary is of a higher type than that which is involuntary. For example, a gift of a thousand dollars

to an orphans' home that comes from a real desire and determination to do something for the orphans is a higher type gift than a similar gift of a thousand dollars that comes from a mere habit of giving. The practical value to the home is the same in both cases. The difference lies solely in the amount of the self which goes into the gifts. The practical value of actions, then, depends not upon their inner nature but upon what they accomplish for life.

Roughly speaking, actions may be divided according to their practical value, into two major classes: (1) helpful actions, and (2) harmful actions, though, of course, there are infinite degrees in each group, and all sorts of overlappings.

1. *Helpful Actions.* What, in general, are helpful actions? This question may be answered as follows: Helpful actions are those which contribute to well-being. The more they contribute, the more helpful they are. Among helpful actions, one may list: the preaching of the Gospel, the care of men's souls, the cure of men's bodies, the work of education, the production of works of art, the development of science, the upholding of high ideals, the constructive governing of peoples, the striving for higher standards in business, and a million other activities of life. The range of helpful actions is practically as wide as life itself.

2. *Harmful Actions.* Harmful actions, on the other hand, are those which hinder or detract from well-being. The more they hinder or detract from it, the more harmful they are. A list of harmful actions would contain the opposites of all helpful actions and would have a range practically as wide as life itself.

The determination of what is helpful and what is harmful is by no means an easy task. For example, a father gives two sons a dollar each. Both gifts are exactly alike in quantity and quality. The one son uses his dollar to buy a book for a neighbor boy who is sick, and thus brings joy to others and to himself; the other son hurries to a lottery device in the corner store, and begins to lay the foundation for a future of gambling. The father's two acts lead to two different results: the one, helpful; the other, harmful. Accordingly, each action must be considered on its own merits. From the practical point of view, that action, in any given situation, is most valuable which contributes most to the well-being of the greatest number for the greatest period of time.

## The Moral Quality of Actions

A third factor needs to be considered: the moral quality of actions. This is by no means the same thing as their practical value, though the two are sometimes confused. The question is often raised: Is an action morally good because it accomplishes some good result? If not, what makes it morally good? Or: Is an action morally bad because its consequences are harmful? If not, what makes it morally bad? The problem has been discussed through the ages, and widely varying answers have been given. Without going into these discussions, one fact seems to stand out clearly, at least from a Christian point of view: The morality of an action is determined fundamentally by its inner motive; that is, an action is basically moral if its motives are right, and it is basically immoral if its motives are wrong. Where there is no conscious motive the action is unmoral, as, for example, when the little baby first stretches out his arm, or when, in reaction to a sensation of pain, a person draws back his hand from a hot stove.

Omitting from further consideration all unmoral actions, let us think a bit further of the other two kinds: moral and immoral. Recall the illustration of the father who gave a dollar to each of two sons. Were his actions morally good or morally bad? The one was helpful; the other, harmful, as we have seen. Was the former, then, moral, and the latter, immoral? Hardly. The moral character of the two actions depends upon the father's motives—the feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and ideals which prompted him, and not upon the consequences of what he did. It follows from this that an action may be morally good and at the same time of no practical value to anyone else. The opposite also is true: an action may be morally bad and at the same time of real social value. These are important facts.

## Desirable Actions

Christian leaders have a responsibility to do all in their power to act in ways which are desirable and to help others to do so. But, when are actions desirable? And, further, when there is a choice among desirable ones, which kinds are most desirable? The foregoing analysis of human actions will now be of genuine service. Let us consider human actions under two main heads:

1. *Actions Not Involving Morality.* These, as has been indicated, are those which are neither morally good nor morally bad, but neutral, or without moral significance. Such actions, since morality has nothing to do with them, are desirable when they are helpful, and undesirable when they are harmful. A reflex action, for example, that does men some good is desirable; one that gets men into trouble is undesirable. If a child steps back from a mosquito and steps into a hornet's nest, his action is not a desirable one, even though the question of morality does not enter into the picture. In unmoral actions, therefore, desirability is determined entirely by practical value.

2. *Actions Involving Morality.* In actions involving morality, however, the situation is quite different. From a practical, worldly point of view, indeed, it may not be so; with the world the all-important thing is results. But from a Christian point of view, results, while of tremendous importance, are yet secondary; the primary factor is motive. However, in any really Christian view of human activity, the primary and the secondary factors are so closely related that they belong together. We may say, then, that those actions are desirable which come from a fundamentally right motive and which at the same time yield valuable results.

Further, it may be stated that, among actions which are both moral and helpful, those are most desirable which are the result of the highest form of volition. A morally good, practically helpful action which comes from the person's whole self willing that action, is more desirable than one that comes from habit, or impulse, or desire.

The Christian leader's task, then, is to help the members of his group to engage in actions which are (1) morally good, (2) practically helpful, and (3) voluntary. The higher the motives, the more helpful the consequences, and the more complete the volition, the more desirable the action. And, on the other hand, it is a part of the leader's task to help check those actions which are morally bad or valueless or harmful in their practical results.

Fortunately all human actions can be progressively controlled; they can be checked, guided, developed, perfected. This is an encouraging fact for those who are endeavoring to mold human nature according to Christian concepts and standards.

## The Control of Actions

The subject of the control of human actions—of human behavior—would require volumes if it were to be discussed thoroughly. Here only a few suggestions can be offered. For convenience they will be presented under two main headings: "External Controls" and "Internal Controls."

1. *External Controls.* Actions may be controlled from without. Examples of this are seen everywhere. Criminals are kept in prisons; violently insane persons are placed in strait-jackets; employees are made to punch time clocks; children are deprived of pleasures or are spanked; and so forth. These are external controls.

Such controls usually take the form of rewards and punishments. The lowest form of these is physical; for example, a whipping for misbehavior or some physical satisfaction for being good. Somewhat higher in the scale of external controls are material rewards and punishments; for example, the giving of a book for regular attendance or the taking away of a favorite toy for some failure. Still higher in the scale are social rewards and punishments; for example, the approval of parents and friends when an action has been satisfactory, or their disapproval when the action has not been satisfactory. Undoubtedly such external controls have their place in life, but they are admittedly inferior to inner controls. A child who will do right only because he is afraid of a whipping or because he knows he will get a piece of candy is certainly not learning to do right because it is right to do right. A boy or girl who attends Sunday school only because he wants to receive a special reward at Christmas is not developing the highest motives for going to Sunday school. An adult who unites with a church merely because he fears the social disapproval of the community in which he lives, is not uniting with the church from a very high Christian motive. External controls frequently do more harm than good. Whenever humanly possible, therefore, other ways of controlling human actions should be found.

One form of outward control, however, is of very decided value in producing desirable actions: the control of external stimuli. It has been repeatedly stated in this book that actions are the consequences of some kind of stimulation. Some of the

stimuli which provoke action are external. The nature of the reaction is, therefore, partly due to the external stimulus. Consider a few examples of the control of actions through the control of external stimuli.

In St. Paul's Sunday school, there were large windows directly in front of the pupils. The pupils simply had to look into bright light throughout their worship and their study. Consequently, the children became either sleepy or irritable. In both cases they became inattentive. The result was that neither the worship nor the study was satisfactory. The matter was frequently discussed: What could be wrong with the pupils of this school? A public school principal was asked to examine the situation. In five minutes he had the answer: Eliminate the light from those front windows or turn the seats around in the other direction. The whole spirit and tone of the school was changed by a simple change in the room.

In St. John's Church, the Primary children met in the church kitchen. The room was filled with large percolators, shiny tables, open cupboards, with all sorts of dishes and utensils, and what not. With every new class it was noted that for some months it was very difficult to secure attention. No wonder—with all those interesting things around to compete with the lesson for the children's attention! At the suggestion of a wide-awake mother, the Primary department was moved to another room. The change in the department's sessions was almost unbelievable.

The Young People's Society of the Church of the Transfiguration met regularly in the homes of its members. Years before, it had met in the basement of the church—a rather dingy place, about as uninviting as one could imagine. Attendances had been slim; so the young folks decided to meet in various homes. The result was surprising. The membership increased considerably. But there was a second surprising result—surprising at least to some people: the spirit of worship and seriousness of purpose soon faded, and the meetings became largely social affairs with a minimum of Christian endeavor. A few of the young people realized the situation and set out to find a remedy. With the help of several other societies of the church, the basement of the church was completely renovated, attractively furnished, and beautified. It took no persuading to get the young folks to return to the church. Gradually, under the influence of their more churchly surroundings, a more serious note began again to permeate the entire group, and that without any loss of joyous fellowship.

These illustrations will suffice to show how people's actions can be controlled through the control of external stimuli.

2. *Internal Controls.* Far more important than outward controls are those inner controls which reach the very source of

human actions—feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and ideals. Unfortunately the establishment of these controls is not so simple a matter as the changing of a room. Time, intelligence, knowledge, understanding, tact, skill, and abundant patience are usually essential. In previous chapters the processes by which feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and ideals are built up were discussed, and it was there pointed out that these produce or affect actions. It will not be necessary here to repeat what has been said. (The student will do well to re-read Chapters IV, V, VI, and VII.)

It may be of some value, however, to point out the tremendous value of internal controls. Perhaps an example or two will be of more assistance than pages of discussion:

Harvey Lehroth was the son of a super-strict father. In his home, daily devotions were regular and long. A whole chapter of the Bible was read, after which the father had an extended discussion of its content and meaning. Then followed something like a quiz. And after this came a lengthy prayer. There was no escaping this daily half-hour or more of "devotion." The father controlled the situation and his will was law.

Then Harvey went away to college. What happened? The answer is not hard to guess. The external control was gone. No inner control had been built up. Within a week after Harvey came to college, his daily devotions became a thing of the past. Years of external control had actually done more harm than good.

Contrast with this another picture:

Mrs. Arnaugh was a widow with two children. Her life was one of incessant toil and soul-crushing hardship. And yet, every evening, when the day's work was done, Mrs. Arnaugh would pick up her Bible and sit in the room where her children were doing their lessons, and read.

"We've a lot of things to be thankful for," she would say as she looked up from the book. "What a glorious thing it is to have God!" And the light in her eyes would show that she had found in the book something that brought new comfort and encouragement.

Sometimes she would read a verse or two. Sometimes she would fold her hands in silent prayer. Sometimes she would suggest that the children unite with her in prayer. And so the years went round.

It was not long before these children were beginning to look into that book which had so much of strength in it for their mother. They, too, began to see its worth. When the elder of the two was not yet twenty, the mother died.

Today those two sons have families of their own. And never a day passes without their reading in the sacred book.

Or, consider this illustration of inner control:

A pastor had a children's talk once a month, and used, upon one occasion, Sylvanus Stall's story of "The Oyster and the Crab." It is a story of an oyster who had a house, but who could not see when a fish came to devour him, and of the crab who had good eyes, but who had no house into which to escape when the fish came. So the oyster and the crab agreed to co-operate. The crab moved in to live with the oyster. The crab would watch and when danger was at hand would pinch the oyster, who would immediately close the doors of his house, and so both were safe. The pastor's application dealt with "conscience," which had moved into man's heart to warn him of danger.

George X, a lad of eight or nine, heard the address. Some days later his mother asked him to wear his overcoat to school.

"I don't want to wear my overcoat and I'm not going to do it!" And with that the door slammed and he was gone.

Five minutes later he was back—for his overcoat.

"What's the matter, George? Too cold?" asked the mother, interested at this surprising act.

"No, not too cold. But the crab pinched me." And off he was.

To help people build inner controls is one of the great responsibilities of Christian leaders—to help them to will to do from high Christian motives that which is right and helpful, under all circumstances.

## WHAT TO DO

### *My Observation Charts*

Turn to the final section of the chart found in the Appendix. Study it carefully. Think of the two persons upon whose charts you have been working. Fill out as much of the final section as you can.

### *An Experiment in Realizing an Ideal*

If you have started to build up an ideal in your group (see under "What to Do" in Chapter VII) continue working on it, and see how it affects the actions of your group. Do not give up until the ideal has been realized.

## HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Mudge, E. L. *Our Pupils*, 1930, pp. 31-52, 164-216.

Norlie, O. M. *An Elementary Christian Psychology*, 1924, pp. 130-141.

Reu, M. *Catechetics*, 1927, pp. 231-240.



## CHAPTER IX

### WE LEARN

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

It is human nature to learn. Various aspects of the learning process have already been treated in previous chapters. It shall be our purpose now, to consider a few of these aspects in a more systematic way and to endeavor to understand some of the major principles involved in learning. As you read this chapter, look for answers to these questions:

1. How does learning take place?
2. What are the fundamental principles of learning?
3. How do these principles apply to learning in church schools and societies?

It is the lesson period of the Sunday school. Teachers and pupils are grouped in little circles. Some pupils are reading from lesson books, listening to their teachers, examining pictures, or engaging in hand work; others are looking around the room, playing with things which they have smuggled into the school, or sitting back listlessly in their chairs. Which of these are learning? Those who are listening, reading, studying, doing purposeful work? Only these? No; the fact is that all are learning. Perhaps only those in the first group are learning the lesson of the day—and maybe even these are not learning it—but every person in the room is learning *something*. That "something" may be how not to pay attention, or how to annoy other people, or how to be irreverent and disrespectful, or any of a thousand other things; but they are learning something. They are learning something simply because human beings are constantly learning throughout their waking hours. It is human nature to learn.

Learning begins at birth. We have already seen (Chapter II) that a child is born with physical and spiritual equipment for learning—senses, a nervous system, tendencies, and capacities. Throughout consciousness, this system functions. From birth to death sensations are received, feelings are aroused, ideas are formed, thoughts are developed, beliefs and ideals are built up, and activities are engaged in. All this is learning.

This learning may be either informal or formal. Informal learning is the kind that is going on all the time—for example, while one is walking down a street, working in a shop, or conversing with friends. The children in the Sunday school who were looking about the room and playing with their toys were learning informally. Informal learning, then, is random learning. Formal learning, on the other hand, takes place only when there is some purpose. A child's training under a tutor or in school is an example. The children in the Sunday school who were reading from their lesson books or who were listening to their teachers were engaged in formal learning. Formal learning, therefore, is purposeful learning, and is usually done under supervision and guidance.

Both kinds, if they are to be learning at all, must be natural; that is, they must be in harmony with the fundamental laws of human nature, for it is simply impossible to learn in any other way. The nervous system works in its own way; the human mind functions according to the laws of its inherent nature; the soul receives impressions, forms ideas, thinks thoughts, arrives at conclusions, and builds up faith and ideals in certain definite ways. Every time a person gets an impression or reaches a conclusion, he operates, and must operate, according to the laws of his nature; there is no other way. To attempt some other way is sheer folly and utter futility, for it cannot be done; human nature is against it. If learning is to take place, accordingly, it is essential that the learning process be true to the natural way by which alone it can take place.

This at once raises the question: What is the natural way? In earlier chapters this question has already received a partial answer, for all that was said concerning feeling, knowing, thinking, believing, willing, and acting is a part of natural learning. It may be helpful, however, to set forth again a few of the outstanding elements which play a part in the total learning process.

### How Learning Takes Place

Learning begins with simple sensations. When these are received, responses of some sort naturally follow. These responses at once produce further sensations, which lead to other responses. So the cycle continues throughout life. Now, the sen-

sations which are experienced are either pleasant or unpleasant. Some bring satisfaction; others, annoyance. For some reason or other, human beings like some sensations and dislike others; it is their nature to do so. Accordingly, they seek, and do, those things which satisfy; and avoid, and do not do, those which annoy. At first their seeking and avoiding is a hit-or-miss proposition, a trial-and-test affair. Thus, for example, a little child will put anything and everything into his mouth in the hope that it will bring a pleasurable sensation. He does not know in advance what will satisfy and what will not, for he has not yet learned; but by this trial-and-test method he is learning.

As experience increases, human beings gradually learn what things bring satisfaction and what things do not. As we have seen, it is their nature to seek over and over again those things which delight; to do over and over again those things which bring pleasure. In this way habits are formed. It should be noted that these early habits are formed not upon the basis of that which is right, but upon the basis of that which satisfies and brings pleasure; for right involves thinking, judging, reasoning, concluding, and up to this point these have played no part in the child's learning. The sole determinant in a little child's habit formation is the fact that something has brought him real satisfaction. If a little child, then, is to learn to do what is right, it is absolutely essential that the right be always made attractive and satisfying; otherwise he will not learn to do it. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reason with him; for he has not as yet had enough experience with which to reason.

Learning, however, is not always so simple as this. As life progresses and experiences still further increase, learning becomes something more than receiving sensations and responding to them, something more than finding out by a hit-or-miss method what is pleasant and what is not. Suppose a child comes to the point where he finds that the same object at one time brings pleasure and at another time brings annoyance—for example, that his pet kitten at one time cuddles snugly in his lap and at another time scratches him—or that the same way of acting at one time brings satisfaction and at another time brings pain—for example, that his crying at one time brings a piece of candy and at another time brings a thorough spanking. Now what is he to do? His kitten pleases and his kitten annoys;

his crying brings pleasure and his crying brings pain. Here is a problem for the little learner; he has run into a difficulty. What will he do?

It is at points such as this that thinking begins. In order to solve his problem, the child recalls other experiences, associates the new experience with the old, uses his imagination, forms judgments, tries them out, comes to new conclusions, and so, gradually finds out why his kitten sometimes cuddles in his lap and at other times scratches; why crying sometimes brings candy and at other times brings whippings. Thus he learns.

The same general process is utilized in all learning. Consider an illustration in the realm of spiritual experience.

Betty Ann was five years old. She had been brought up in a Christian home and, since her third birthday, had gone to Sunday school. She had learned some things about God and had some ideas concerning him. She loved flowers, and one of her greatest joys was to help her father in their beautiful garden. In Sunday school, one day, the Beginners' teacher told the class the story of "Jesus and the Lilies" and concluded with the lesson thought: God loves flowers; God cares for flowers. It was a new thought to Betty Ann, and it brought her much joy. As she worked in her garden, she was heard frequently to say, "God loves flowers; God cares for flowers."

Then, one day, Betty Ann came into her garden, only to find every flower broken, crushed to the ground, dirty and muddy. A devastating storm had done its work. The child looked at the sad picture with tears in her eyes. Through her mind went the thought, "God loves flowers; God cares for flowers." How could he? It wasn't true. Here was a difficulty, a problem. The child began to think.

The next Sunday Betty Ann refused to sing the song which the class had learned about God and the flowers, and she gave her teacher her reason. Fortunately the teacher was alert and saw her opportunity. She explained about storms, flowers, and God's love and care; she related other experiences from the children's own life to show that people can care for things even after they are destroyed; she associated Betty Ann's experience with these other experiences, and led the children to see that God does love and care for flowers even when storms crush them. Thus she broadened the children's ideas of God. And so Betty Ann learned more about God and his ways. Once more the feeling of satisfaction returned, and Betty Ann could say, "God loves flowers; God cares for flowers," with new and deeper meaning and with a sense of delight.

An analysis of this incident shows the presence of practically all of the elements which enter into learning: sensations, ideas, association of ideas, recall, thought, reasoning, conclusion, and so forth. It shows, too, four very important facts about the

learning process: (1) that the mind must be ready for new learning—Betty Ann was able to understand the meaning of “God loves flowers; God cares for flowers,” because she already knew something about God, about flowers, about love, and about caring for things; (2) that there must be satisfaction if there is to be real learning—Betty Ann found this satisfaction in the to-her-new thought “God loves flowers; God cares for flowers,” but the moment that same thought brought her dissatisfaction, that moment her learning that God loves flowers was seriously hindered; (3) that where there is satisfaction, repetition takes place naturally—Betty Ann said the sentence over and over again because it brought her real joy; and (4) that progress beyond a certain point depends upon the presentation of difficulties which force one to think—Betty Ann would not have been prompted to learn more about God and his ways, had not some difficulty arisen at some time to make her seek further truth about God.

To summarize our very sketchy discussion of how human beings learn, we may say: they learn through the experience of pleasure and displeasure, through the experience of repeated practice, through the experience of difficulty, and through the association of new experiences with old. These are fundamental principles of learning. Let us consider them more fully.

### Fundamental Principles of Learning

1. *The Principle of Effect.* One factor which enters into learning is the feeling, or feelings, of the person who is learning: the feeling of satisfaction and of dissatisfaction. This may be seen almost anywhere. Consider a few examples.

Bobby is two and one-half years old and is brought to Sunday school. There are many interesting things about the room, but Bobby is placed in a chair, much too big for him, and is told to sit quietly. Every time he gets up to see or do something interesting, an assistant is there to put him back on his chair. For a whole hour he is taken through a routine none of which he understands. The next week the story is repeated—another hour of approximately the same routine. Throughout the session, Bobby has a persistent feeling that he is unhappy, that there is nothing that is interesting, that Sunday school is drudgery. Does he learn anything? Yes—that Sunday school is as uninteresting as anything can well be. But that is about all that he does learn. Even if he is compelled to go to Sunday school for the next ten or fifteen years, he will

not acquire the habit of going willingly to Sunday school unless conditions are completely changed; instead, he will most certainly acquire the habit of hating Sunday school, and the moment the external compulsion is removed, that moment he will stop going.

Mr. Ling, a Chinese laundryman, passes a church and reads on the bulletin board the topic of next Sunday's sermon: "The Joy of Christian Fellowship." He has been very lonesome for a great many years; perhaps there will be something here for him. So he goes to church. No one greets him. Dozens of heads turn toward him. He feels that he is being watched. He takes a seat, only to find that a fashionably dressed woman moves from her pew into an adjacent one. The preacher preaches his sermon: "The Joy of Christian Fellowship." But throughout his stay in the church Mr. Ling has no consciousness of joy and fellowship at all. Indeed, he has a feeling of more intense loneliness than he has experienced in many a year. Will Mr. Ling learn the truth which the pastor is preaching? The chances are all against it. His feelings have been feelings of annoyance. If he ever comes back into a Christian church, it will be because of some external force or persuasion, not because of inner desire.

A Brotherhood is about to disband. It has struggled along for years without success. A mere handful of members has attended the meetings. There is a general feeling that Brotherhoods are inane, valueless, hopeless, things. Then a new member joins—a gentleman who has been active in another Brotherhood. He sees the situation and, after a few weeks' investigation of the needs of the congregation and of the community, projects a plan. He suggests that the Brotherhood undertake to build a parish house for the use of the young people of the community. The project seems visionary, but the gentleman has discovered, through his weeks of investigation, that the community needs just such a center for its young people, and that many of the leaders of the community are willing to assist in the project. The proposal is announced; individuals are interested; special meetings are held; committees are appointed to study various angles of the situation; others are appointed to canvass the congregation and the community for support. A feeling of worthwhileness develops. The Brotherhood becomes a living thing. The members learn about community needs, about the church's mission and duty, about the interests of young people. As the project progresses, a feeling of satisfaction grows up. There is interest, enthusiasm, a willingness to work and make sacrifices. The Brotherhood learns what a Brotherhood can be.

These illustrations will suffice to show that feelings play an important part in learning; that feelings of satisfaction promote learning; that feelings of dissatisfaction hinder it. There is, therefore, no more important principle than this: If learning is to take place, there must be a feeling of satisfaction—a pleasant,

or agreeable, or satisfying effect. This is true even in cases where the immediate result is one of annoyance, for the learner will not continue his learning willingly unless he can see beyond the immediate annoyance a pleasure great enough to make the present annoyance seem worth enduring. Thus, for example, a youth can be led to take very hard courses in school and college, provided he can be made to see that these will help him to gain wealth, power, equipment for worth-while living, or whatever he may be particularly interested in.

This principle—namely, that learning must have a satisfying effect—has numerous applications in church schools and societies. To mention but a few: if learning is to be as effective as possible, the room and the total environment should be made as pleasing as possible; the subject matter should be definitely related to the needs, interests, and capacities of the learners; the methods used should bring such satisfaction that pupils will want to pay attention and to participate; the entire group—leader and learners—must be thoroughly congenial; and the ultimate goals of the learning must commend themselves as being amply and richly worth while.

2. *The Principle of Readiness.* A second factor which enters into all learning is the mental readiness of the learner to grasp what is to be learned. This mental readiness consists of three elements: (1) previous knowledge sufficient to comprehend the new, (2) attention sufficient to grasp the new, and (3) intelligence sufficient to associate the new and the old. These three elements are so self-evident as to require little discussion. And yet they are not infrequently overlooked.

Take the matter of previous knowledge. It is manifestly impossible for a person to learn advanced algebra until he knows the elements of simple arithmetic; or for a woman to make a dress until she knows something about cloth, cutting, and sewing; or for a child to pray meaningfully until he has at least a little knowledge of God.

Take the matter of attention. Unless there is some attention, there is no learning. For example, a person may sit before a radio for an hour without hearing a word of what is being said—his attention is focused upon other things or thoughts; or a group of children may have a picture held before them for several minutes without their so much as knowing it—their atten-

tion is elsewhere. Attention is normally focused upon that which is most interesting at the moment. And interest, in turn, is usually where there is satisfaction. If, then, a person is to learn, he must give some attention—he must take enough interest in what is going on to set his mind upon it.

Take the matter of ability to associate the new with the old. A person who cannot recall what he has learned or who does not have the ability to associate a new fact with other facts already learned cannot really make any progress in learning. His knowledge at best will be a mass of unrelated ideas none of which has any value, for without the power to associate one idea with another he will not be able to think at all. On the other hand, the larger the number of associations, the larger will be the capacity to retain, the ability to recall, and the intelligence to think and will and act aright.

This principle—namely, that learning depends upon mental readiness—has valuable suggestions for Christian leaders: (1) The Christian leader must find out what his pupils know before they come to him, in order that he may build upon that knowledge. (2) The Christian leader must secure attention, for without it his pupils will learn nothing—at least, nothing that he is trying to have them learn. There are various ways of securing it—for example, through discipline, through rewards, through sensational stunts. But by far the best way is through interest. When things are really interesting, attention usually comes of its own accord. Consequently, church schools and church societies should be made so thoroughly interesting every moment of the session that attention will voluntarily or involuntarily be focused upon the project in hand. (3) The Christian leader must constantly help the members of his group to associate the new with the old; the wider the range of associations, the better. This can be done through thought-provoking questions, through free discussions in which pupils are permitted to relate their experiences, through specific applications of the new truth to many areas of life already known to the pupils. Thus, for example, if a teacher is trying to teach love for man, he will do well to ask questions which will help his pupils to recall many instances of such love; to let the class tell where they have seen or practiced such love; and to point out how such love can be shown at home, in school, on the playground, on the street, and in many other



places. General truths are generally meaningless unless they are brought to bear specifically upon a wide variety of definite life situations.

3. *The Principle of Practice.* If people are to learn, they must not only have right feelings and a mind that is ready to learn, but they must also be given opportunities to practice what they learn. Practice brings success. This is readily recognized in regard to physical skills. If a person wants to learn to swim, he must swim. The same principle is true in the realm of facts, ideas, and attitudes. The individual must think, feel, and do the new many times before it is learned thoroughly. If a person is to learn reverence for God, it is not enough to know the first commandment; he must practice reverence for God in church, at home, in school, everywhere. Only so will it become an integral and habitual part of his life.

This practice, further, must bring genuine satisfaction. There was a time when many people believed that the more distasteful a task was, the better it was learned. This is now known to be incorrect. Indeed, as was pointed out earlier in this chapter, the opposite is true: Human beings learn best when practice brings enjoyment, approval, success, reward.

This principle—namely, that learning depends upon practice—needs to be kept in mind by every Christian leader. It has several very practical implications: (1) Repetition is very important in the learning process. This repetition must be more than a monotonous drill; it must be interesting and worth while. Further, it must not be underdone nor yet overdone. Insufficient repetition will not bring the individual to the point where he has really learned; too much repetition, especially at one time, may produce annoyance and even physical and mental exhaustion. There is a very practical problem at this point: What is a leader to do when he has both bright and dull persons in the same group? The only possible answer is: Either have a separate class for the bright, and another for the dull; or give individual attention to each pupil. (2) Let the members of the group practice what they have learned in as many different situations as possible. If a class has had a lesson on sharing, the pupils should be given an opportunity at once to share books, places next to the teacher, objects which they cherish, money, and other possessions; they should be encouraged to share dur-

ing the week; they should be asked to bring something to share next Sunday. (3) Their practice of whatever they have learned should be rewarded by a sense of its worthwhileness. If a child, for example, is taught to share and is then sent home to share something he has made with his parents, and they show no appreciation of his efforts, it is going to be doubly hard to develop in that child the habit of sharing.

4. *The Principle of Difficulty.* The three principles already discussed are of truly fundamental importance, for without right feelings, right mind-set, and right practice, learning will not proceed very far. But even with these, it will not progress as far as it should, unless there is some challenging difficulty to overcome. Reasoning, the highest form of thinking, as we have seen, begins with a problem, a difficulty to be overcome. For example, a child may be taught to pray, and he may learn to repeat beautiful prayers; but he will never learn the deepest meaning of prayer until some day he discovers that his little, learned prayers are inadequate to express the deeper feelings and convictions of his maturing soul. Only when he meets this problem will he go on to discover the deeper meanings of prayer. The elaboration of this principle would require a chapter by itself. It will have to suffice here to point out one or two practical values of this principle.

This principle—namely, that learning is spurred to greater achievement by the difficulties it encounters—should lead Christian church workers to set their groups challenging tasks. Of course, the tasks should not be so difficult as to lead to hopelessness—the learner must experience the joy of making progress—but they should be sufficiently difficult to fire the imagination, to set thought processes in action, to require real determination and “stick-to-itiveness” for their accomplishment, to challenge the very best of which an individual is capable. The church and its leaders have generally erred on the side of making assignments and asking services which are too commonplace to call forth the best that is in people.

There is a second application of this principle, which is somewhat akin to the first: Do not tell your group everything; let them find out as much as possible for themselves. Guide them as far as you must, but no farther. To be sure, sometimes it would take far too much time to have the group discover for

itself what could be imparted in a few minutes. The leader must use judgment. The time element is an important factor in the work of the church, for it is already far too limited. But, within the time available, let children, young folks, and adults do their own thinking and reach their own conclusions—of course, under the guidance of the Word of God and of God's eternal Spirit.

### WHAT TO DO

#### *An Analysis of My Own Study of This Course*

Think back over the period during which you have been taking this course in leadership education. Think particularly of your study in connection with it. Ask yourself these questions: Has the study of this course brought me satisfaction? Why, or why not? Have I had sufficient background to understand this course and to profit by it? Have I really wanted to learn? Have I given it all the attention I might have given it? Have I associated what I have learned with my church work? Have I reviewed the chapters a sufficient number of times to have really learned them? Have I definitely tried to put into practice what I have learned? Have I let difficulties discourage me? How can I improve my own learning process?

#### *An Analysis of My Own Group Session*

Think of the group of which you are a leader. Ask yourself these questions: Do the members of my group really enjoy our sessions? If not, why not? Are the lessons or topics which we discuss too difficult, just right, or too easy? If too difficult or too easy, what can be done to correct this? Is there anything that distracts attention? What can I do to change this? Do I give my group a chance to practice what they learn? Do they enjoy this or are they annoyed by it? If annoyed, what can I do to help them enjoy it? Do I let my group find out some things for themselves? Do I encourage personal thinking?

### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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Powell, W. E. *The Growth of Christian Personality*, 1929, pp. 92-146.

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## A PREVIEW

### CHAPTERS X, XI, XII

We have been considering how human beings grow, feel, think, believe, build ideals, act, and learn. The effort has been made throughout to relate general principles to the practical work of congregational leaders. However, a further step needs to be taken: the truths and facts which have been learned need to be adjusted and applied specifically to the various age-groups with which church leaders work. It is manifestly impossible to do this in any adequate way in a book of the present limited dimensions. The consideration of the nature of Nursery, Beginner, Primary, and Junior children, and of Intermediates, Seniors, Young People, and Adults must be left to specialized courses dealing specifically with individual age-groups. Nevertheless, it will be possible to set forth a few practical considerations and to make a few practical suggestions relative to some of the most common characteristics of children, young folks, and adults. Chapters X, XI, and XII endeavor to do this.

As an aid to leaders, the material in each of these chapters has been grouped under four general headings: "Worship Activities," "Fellowship Activities," "Study Activities," and "Service Activities"—the four major activities of practically all church work. Under each of these headings are treated those characteristics of human nature which appear to be most closely associated with the particular activities under consideration. This should make it possible for leaders to see at a glance how they can be of help in developing the lives of the members of their groups.

In conclusion, let it be said that the mere reading and study of the following chapters will not be particularly helpful in improving church work unless the suggestions offered are tried, experimented with, adjusted to individual groups and local conditions, and thus made of practical value.

## CHAPTER X

# OUR CHILDREN

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter, as has been indicated in the Preview, we shall consider a few of the more outstanding characteristics of children, persons under twelve years of age. As you read, try to find out:

1. What these characteristics are;
2. How an understanding of them may be valuable in improving the children's worship, study, fellowship, and service activities;
3. Some definite ways in which you can improve these activities in your own church group.

It is largely through worship, study, fellowship, and service experiences that Christian leaders endeavor to develop boys and girls into Christian personalities. It is, therefore, important that such leaders understand the age-group possibilities and limitations of children in respect to each of these kinds of activity.

We have seen that the normal child is born with a physical and a spiritual equipment sufficient, if properly developed, to meet the needs of life. He has native tendencies which can be directed and native capacities which can be stimulated. While it is true that there are marked differences in children—physical, mental, moral, social, and spiritual differences—it is equally true that there are general traits and tendencies which are common to almost all of them, so that it becomes possible to understand them as a group. This enables the leader to deal with them quite effectively in groups. It should not be forgotten, however, that individual attention must always be given to those who vary from the general characteristics—for example, to particularly large or small, bright or dull, over-emotional or under-emotional, over-active or under-active children.

### Worship Activities

We have seen that children are born with a capacity for God, a capacity which, if stimulated by the Word of God, can lead to genuine spiritual life. Little children should, therefore, be brought early under the influence of the Word. Church leaders should encourage parents to bring their little ones to Baptism

and to begin Christian nurture in the home. A part of this nurture should be in worship.

Little children can worship God. They can be led to know, love, and trust in God, and to express their love and faith in simple acts of worship. How can this be done?

In the first place, most children early develop faith in, and love for, their parents. Such faith and love, when stimulated by the Word—through Bible stories, stories about Jesus, sentence hymns, and simple prayers—can be extended to include not only loved ones here but also the loved One there. In the second place, little children soon develop a sense of wonder. They naturally wonder at the great, and beautiful, and powerful things which they see all about them. This feeling of wonder can be transferred from the natural object to the One who made it. (Recall the experience of the children and the lily, p. 45.) In the third place, as children grow in years and in experience, other natural feelings develop: the feeling of gratitude, the feeling of sorrow for wrong-doing, the feeling of need for forgiveness, to mention but a few. Now, all these feelings can find expression in worship. As each feeling shows itself in the life of the children, it should be utilized to lead them into ever new and ever richer experiences of worship.

Worship experiences should at first be very, very brief. Children's attention is of very short duration, and their emotional responses change rapidly. Therefore their worship must be kept within definite limits. A bit of music, a simple hymn, a verse of Scripture or a very short story, a sentence prayer—any one or two of these are ample. As the children grow older, their attention span gradually increases and their emotions become more stable. More worship elements can then be added and the period of worship extended. But never should children be compelled to engage in worship which is beyond their natural capacities.

Further, worship experiences, to be real to children, must be kept as natural as possible. Their worship should be as natural and spontaneous as is their talking with their parents. It is quite easy to get children to engage in worship which is entirely meaningless and unnatural to them; but it is not genuine worship, and ultimately it will lead to pure formality in the worship of later life. Children, therefore, should not be forced to fold their hands, bow their heads, and close their eyes; let the leader

assume desirable postures, and the children will soon follow her example. Children, further, should not be forced to use adult language which they do not and cannot understand; let the leader use the language of childhood, and worship will become very real and precious.

While worship should always be as natural and spontaneous as possible, there is room for the gradual introduction of worship which is more formal in character. There is real spiritual value in having children know and use the worship treasures of the church. A beginning may be made with simple Bible verses, hymns, and prayers. As the children grow older, simple responses, children's creeds, and blessings may be added. Gradually these elements may be enlarged and elaborated until at length the children are led to appreciate the beauty, orderliness, and dignity of formal services. But always—and this cannot be emphasized too strongly—elements and forms must be used which are within the mental grasp of the children of the group which is worshipping.

Children who are guided in this way will, by the time they have entered the Junior department, have a real appreciation of the meaning and value of worship. This appreciation can be greatly enlarged by giving them an opportunity to help in the planning of periods of worship. It is surprising what splendid results can be attained when Juniors are encouraged to participate actively in preparing their own worship—of course, under supervision. They can select hymns, prayers, Bible verses, and Psalms; they can, some of them, write psalms, poems, and prayers of their own; they can arrange these various elements in a truly effective order; and they can assist in the conduct of worship with a fine sense of spirituality, dignity and reverence.

### Study Activities

A second important phase of Christian nurture is study. In the service of Baptism, sponsors are asked, "Do you promise to instruct him [the child] in the Word of God, and to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" and are exhorted to "diligently and faithfully teach" the child and to "provide for his instruction in the Christian faith." It is evident, then, that study is a vital part of Christian living. Now, what

and how can we expect little children to learn? Let us consider, first, the "what" and, then, the "how."

Manifestly this is not the place to enumerate all the things which children of various ages can be expected to learn. Lesson courses and programs for children's societies are usually graded to meet the needs of each age-group. A simple statement of principle, together with a few practical suggestions based upon it, must suffice to indicate the range of study materials which have real value: All study materials—Bible passages, stories, truths, facts, hymns, prayers, memory materials, problems, experiences, and so forth—must be kept within the capacities of the children of the group. It follows from this that, for effective study, materials must be graded; that Beginners, for example, cannot be expected to learn all that Juniors can learn; that subjects requiring considerable past experience for their comprehension are by that very fact improper for younger children; that problems which demand thinking and reasoning should be reserved for children who have developed these abilities; that vocabulary which is entirely proper for older children may be totally unsuited to the needs of younger children. This matter of keeping everything which a child is to learn within his experience and ability is of absolutely fundamental importance.

Of equal significance is the matter of the "how" in children's study. And here again a fundamental principle must be observed: All study activities—seeing, listening, discussing, reading, writing, drawing, memorizing, examining, thinking, reasoning, reporting, working, and so forth—must be kept within the limits of the children's abilities. The practical applications of this principle are legion. Merely a few can be suggested here.

In the first place, physical equipment used in study must be suited to each age-group. If children are to engage in effective study—that is, if they are really to learn—then pictures, objects, blackboard drawings, charts, maps, and all other physical equipment must be large enough for them to see without strain. They must, too, be placed near enough and low enough for pupils to see without effort. Generally speaking such materials should be placed approximately on the level of the pupil's eyes. Special attention should be given also to the size of print which children are to read. Children below the Primary department are not



expected to read. Type for children should be about as follows, with plenty of space between lines:

This is a good size for younger  
Primary children

This is a good size for older Primary  
children

This is a good size for Junior boys and girls

In the second place, physical activities employed for learning purposes must be suited to the bodily development of each age-group. For example, little children cannot be expected to build, draw, cut, or paste very accurately, since their smaller muscles are not developed. They enjoy trying to do these things, and even their smallest successes should be appreciatively acknowledged. Further, if the best results are to be attained, thought must be given to such matters as size of chairs and tables, for the best work can be done only when the children are comfortable. The following heights of tables and chair seats are suggested:

	Nursery	Beginners	Primary	Junior
Chairs	10"	12"	14"	16"
Tables	20"	22"	24"	28"

Further, it should be remembered that children's activities normally take the form of play. The play spirit is in children, and should be utilized to the fullest possible extent. Many of the study activities of children can be put in play form: playing going to church; playing helping people; playing taking a walk to see what God has made; etc. This is perfectly legitimate activity, for it should be kept in mind that children's play is as serious a matter to them as work is to adults. It is quite probably true that children in the lower departments learn more through guided play than through formal teaching procedures.

In the third place, mental activities must be suited to the mental development of each age-group. For example, children do not think abstractly, but concretely; therefore, if they are to

think at all, abstract words—kindness, goodness, and the like—must be avoided. Further, they think in terms of their own experience; therefore, such words as sin, salvation, faith, repentance, missionary, and hundreds of others, should be replaced by such words as wrong-doing, help, love, being sorry, Jesus' helper, and so forth. When new words are used, they should be made perfectly clear through numerous concrete illustrations. Again, children should not be expected to reason out problems which are beyond them. Reasoning, as we have seen, requires considerable experience and knowledge. Little children, whose experience and knowledge are very limited, are simply unable to reason out problems that involve any considerable difficulty. As the children's experiences increase, of course their reasoning powers increase. By the time they reach the Junior department, they possess not a little ability to think problems through to a solution.

Each of these points could be much elaborated, and many other factors related to study activities could be discussed, but the scope of this text forbids further treatment, except to say that the principles of learning discussed in Chapter IX need constantly to be recalled and applied in directing the study activities of children.

### Fellowship Activities

A third factor in Christian nurture is fellowship. The church has practically always laid great emphasis upon this aspect of its life. It is, therefore, a part of every Christian leader's task to guide people into the enriching experiences of fellowship with one another.

Little children, though they appear to be little individualists, need the fellowship of other people. The home naturally is the first to provide it; the church should be a close second. From the moment a child enters the church door, he should be made to feel that he is among friends, among people who care for him and love him. The very atmosphere of the room should breathe friendliness. The greatest care must, however, be taken that persons, whether leaders or other children, do not too quickly thrust themselves upon him. Many children are timid and easily frightened by strange people, no matter how friendly and kind they may be. Little children should be allowed to make their

own way into the life of the group, with just a bit of kindly encouragement from the leader. If given a little time, they will do this naturally.

Children need the fellowship of their leaders; they need older persons whom they can trust, to whom they can turn for protection and care, in whom they can find ever-present helpfulness. But they need, too, the fellowship of other children of their own age. It is through such fellowship that they learn to share, to co-operate, and to appreciate others. It is often the Christian leader's privilege to introduce little children into their first social contacts with other children of their own age. There are many ways in which this can be done: through play, by means of walks and marches, by the use of interesting handwork, by engaging with a small group in appealing activities such as playing the piano, singing, showing and talking about pictures, and so forth.

While at first children are rather individualistic and like to play by themselves, they soon catch the social spirit and enjoy doing interesting things together. Even as early as in the Beginners' department co-operative projects may be introduced. As the children grow older, they take more and more to activities which require playing and working together—for example, to making posters, to selecting and arranging materials for class books, to planning and participating in dramatizations, to preparing socials for their parents and friends, and to planning and assisting in the conduct of their own worship.

In addition to these in-session fellowship activities, children enjoy out-of-session opportunities for fellowship: visits to the homes of their leaders, parties in their own homes or in the church, trips to near-by church institutions, group walks and hikes, picnics, and other such social contacts. This is particularly true of Juniors, who enjoy forming clubs and participating in group sports. Much can be accomplished in such out-of-session activities—much that will be of lasting benefit both to the leaders and to the members of the group. It is on such occasions that leaders can get to know their pupils as they really are in everyday life; that they can build up confidence in themselves; that they can contribute to the formation of Christian character; that they can influence the everyday conduct of their boys and girls; that they can enrich the spirit of fellowship in the group.

Not infrequently, during both in-session and out-of-session fellowship, social problems arise, which the leader must meet with wisdom and tact. There is, for example, the quite common problem of children's strong dislikes. Whatever may produce them, there they are. What can be done about them? There are several possibilities, a few of which are here indicated: (1) Always endeavor to make the group as congenial as possible. Children of widely different ages do not mix well, and it is usually better not to attempt to force them into a common fellowship. Older children quite frequently look upon younger children as mere babies; and the younger ones are very often uncomfortable and even afraid in the presence of older children. It is wise, generally speaking, to plan the fellowship life of children according to age-groups, with necessary modifications to take care of individuals who are highly developed or unusually retarded physically, mentally, or socially. (2) Sometimes it is advisable entirely to ignore the children's personal dislikes. These frequently pass as quickly as they arise, and harmony is then restored without any effort on the part of the leader. (3) A very helpful and effective way of overcoming dislikes is by linking something which the child likes very much with the person whom the child dislikes. The child's attention is then frequently focused so strongly upon the object which he likes that he soon begins to like the person who has the object. For example, how quickly two Juniors who cannot get along together will make up and be friends when they discover that they are both stamp collectors; their liking for stamps overcomes their dislike for each other. (4) Often a frank explanation of the situation which produced the dislike helps to clear it up. Children, especially the older ones, are quite able to appreciate such explanations, and they are usually willing to acknowledge their mistakes, forgive, and forget.

Then there is the problem of selfishness. Anyone who has had experience with children knows how frequently two little youngsters want to play with the same toy or to look at the same book at the same time, even though the room may be full of other toys and books. This characteristic shows itself in church schools and societies in many different forms. Two children want to sit beside the leader, or to take up the offering, or to have the same part in a dramatization. Often the harmony of the group's fel-

lowship is interrupted by such situations. A few suggestions on solving such fellowship problems are here offered: (1) The leader must always be absolutely fair and impartial. There should be no "teacher's pets," no favorites. (2) The practice of "taking turns" should be encouraged, and, whenever possible, these turns should be given very soon after the problem arises. If two children want to hold the birthday bank, let one child hold it for the boys, and the other for the girls. (3) Children, especially older ones, have usually a keen sense of fairness, and this can often be appealed to with good results. (4) Endeavor to build up a spirit of co-operation from the very beginning. This is not a remedy for application after a problem has arisen, but a preventive measure which will help to keep such problems from arising.

There are, of course, many other problems which have a bearing on fellowship: temper tantrums, children's natural impulsiveness, disobedience, and endless others. In each case the cause must be determined. Problems may arise from physical, mental, or emotional disturbances. The treatment in each case will depend upon the nature of the cause. Under no circumstance should a leader lose his own perfect self-control. Always there should be poise, calmness, sympathetic understanding, patience, and thoroughly Christian love.

### Service Activities

A fourth important element of Christian life is service. Training in service should, accordingly, be a part of Christian education. The service activities of children should begin with everyday things. It is natural for children to want to help—that is, if the helping brings satisfaction. This satisfaction may grow out of a feeling of the importance of the act, or out of the praise which is given, or out of seeing that others have been made happy, or out of the sheer fun of doing something. Whatever the child's motive for rendering service, the service should bring its own reward. As the child grows in love for Jesus, his motives will gradually rise to higher levels.

If service is to become habitual in the life of children, they must practice serving. They should be encouraged to help. Definite opportunities should be pointed out to them. They

should be given very definite things to do. But there should be opportunities for choice; only so will judgment and initiative be developed. Forced service is not likely to lead to Christian, free-will service in later life.

In developing service activities with children, three matters of major importance should be kept in mind: (1) the child's physical ability; (2) his understanding; and (3) his feelings.

First, what are children physically able to do? This will, of course, depend upon their age and development. At first their service will consist of the very simplest kinds of acts, and gradually they will be able to do more and more. Among possible service activities for children are these: simple deeds of helpfulness in the home, in church, in school; putting away toys and books; making things for others; sharing; showing kindness to people and to pets; taking care of themselves and of younger children; running errands; caring for and arranging equipment in the church school or society; discovering ways of making people happy. It is a mistake to judge the services of children by their practical utility. When a child has done the best of which he is capable, his effort should be accepted, not his practical achievement. All children's deeds must be judged from their standpoint, not from that of adults.

Secondly, how much of their service activity can children understand? This again depends on their development. But it depends also on how their service is interpreted to them. At first their deeds of helpfulness should be directed to persons and things with which the children themselves have contacts, in order that the children may see the results of their work. Caring for a plant and seeing it grow is of more value in the service training of a child than is bringing a packet of seeds for an orphans' home. Giving a cherished toy to a poorer child in the group is of more value than bringing a dollar for foreign missions. The little child can understand the value of the former, while it is very hard, if not impossible, for him to understand the latter. If children are trained to give and serve intelligently, this will eventually mean much more to the church than the few dollars which he may give unintelligently.

Third, what about the children's feelings? The emotional aspects of service are as important as are its mental aspects. Little children must be led to feel the needs of others, to feel

love for them, to feel that they can help, to feel that they should help, to feel that their help is worth while, to feel that Jesus is happy when they help, to feel that they are helping God when they help God's children. Gradually these various feelings can be built up to the point where they will actually move the children to want to serve God and man.

### WHAT TO DO

#### *My Observation Charts*

Have you completed your two charts? If not, are there items which you can now fill out? Study these two charts carefully. Are they of any practical value to you in your work? Would it be helpful to have similar charts for the other members of your class or group?

#### *Improving My Work with My Group*

Run through this chapter again and check all suggestions which you consider of practical value for your work with your own church group. Select *one* item which you believe valuable, practicable, and not too difficult of attainment. Plan to make use of it in your work at the very next opportunity. Then try another, and another, and another. Thus improvement will come.

### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Anderson, J. E. *Happy Childhood*, 1933.

Arlitt, A. H. *The Child from One to Twelve*, 1931.

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Whitley, M. T. *A Study of the Little Child*, 1932.

Whitley, M. T. *A Study of the Primary Child*, 1930.

## CHAPTER XI

# OUR YOUNG FOLKS

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

This chapter endeavors to do for leaders of young folks (Intermediates, Seniors, and Young People) what Chapter X did for leaders of children—namely, to consider a few outstanding characteristics of the persons with whom they are working and to show how a knowledge and understanding of these will help Christian leaders to improve and make more effective their church work. As you read this chapter, try to find out:

1. What traits of young people have value for worship;
2. How an understanding of young folks may improve study procedures;
3. What young folks need in the way of fellowship;
4. What developments in young folks make them particularly fitted to participate in service activities.

The church life of Christian young folks, like that of children, falls naturally into the same four categories which were presented in the preceding chapter: worship, study, fellowship, and service. It must not be thought that these form separate, unrelated compartments; they do not. They are all interrelated, and in any one of them the other three normally play a part. Thus, for example, worship has its study, fellowship, and service aspects, and the same is true of each of the others. But for purposes of study the four may be considered separately.

Further, it should be remembered throughout this discussion that there is a very decided development between the beginning and the end of the adolescent period. At the beginning these persons are children; at the end they are adults. Tremendous physical changes take place during these twelve years; mental horizons vastly increase; significant emotional developments occur; spiritual life undergoes important transformations. All these changes affect worship, study, fellowship, and service. Unfortunately it will not be possible to treat each stage of adolescent development separately; the statements here made and the suggestions here offered must be general enough to include the whole adolescent period, from twelve to twenty-four years of age. Leaders who desire more detailed information



about pupils of definite age-groups will find such information in specialized courses.

### Worship Activities

There are many general traits of young folks which have a definite relation to worship. Among these are: (1) a larger ability to understand spiritual matters; (2) a growing sense of the need of God; (3) a keen desire for fellowship; (4) a love for that which is beautiful; (5) a spirit of idealism. Let us consider each of these in relation to worship.

Young folks have a larger ability to understand spiritual matters. While children's thought life is largely confined to the world of physical realities, young folks penetrate into the secrets which lie behind these realities. For example, to the child the idea of God as Spirit has little meaning—he pictures God largely as a great big Man; but to the adolescent the idea of God as Spirit becomes increasingly meaningful. To the child the idea of sin is at best an idea of concrete wrong-doing; but to the adolescent the thought of sin as a condition of the soul is not impossible of comprehension. To the child heaven is a very physical place; but to the adolescent it takes on a spiritual meaning. And so it is with many other spiritual realities. The wider experiences of young folks, their larger contacts with people, their more extensive reading, and their more highly developed powers of thought all contribute to their better understanding of things of the spirit. Consequently their worship may now become increasingly intelligent, meaningful, and vital.

Accordingly, this is the time for Christian leaders to guide their pupils into a fuller understanding of worship and into a richer experience of it. The various elements of worship—its fundamental concepts, values, attitudes, forms, symbols, rites, sacraments, and so forth—should now be made clear and compelling.

Young folks have a growing sense of the need of God. The adolescent period, particularly the earlier years of it, is a time of physical, mental, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual adjustment. For many young folks the early adolescent years are years of inner confusion and strain. Consequently there develops, not infrequently, a deep sense of sin, and the need of forgiveness is keenly felt. There is felt, too, a need for something

or someone in whom life can again find unity, purpose, and inner peace. What these young folks need is God and the assurance of his reality and presence, of his love and sympathy, of his mercy and forgiveness, of his understanding and helpfulness. Worship, more than any other thing, can meet this need: for it is in worship that man comes into closest conscious contact with God.

Accordingly, this is the time for Christian leaders to help their pupils to see God as the Satisfier of spiritual needs. Mere study about God will not bring this result. It is imperative that young folks be given opportunities to experience in their own lives the glorious satisfactions which come from personal communion with God in Bible reading, meditation, prayer, and participation in the Lord's Supper.

Young folks have a keen desire for fellowship. Youth is, normally, a social period. We shall consider a little later the fellowship aspects of young people's lives. It will be sufficient here to say that worship offers an opportunity for fellowship of the highest possible order—fellowship with God and with God's children. Now, if young folks are to have their desire for fellowship satisfied by worship, the worship must give evidence of being fellowship; there must be real spiritual communion and genuine oneness of life. Mere formality in worship will never satisfy youth.

Accordingly, every effort should be made by Christian leaders to make fellowship with God very real for young folks. This can be done to some extent by making the services of the church genuinely spiritual in quality and also by pervading them with a spirit of warm and cordial fellowship which welcomes young folks most sincerely. It can be done, too, by leaders taking advantage of worshipful moments in the midst of study and service activities for spontaneous communion with God. And again, it can be done by encouraging young folks to engage in moments of worship in the midst of life's activities. It is more natural for young people to engage in such worship than most people suppose. A word of encouragement is, in many cases, all that is needed.

Young folks have a genuine love for that which is beautiful. *Æsthetic* feelings are prominent. Youth is a time when beauty makes its strongest appeal. Young people's sense experiences are

intensified: flowers seem more beautiful; sunsets, more glorious; persons, more charming than ever. Naturally, then, the beautiful in worship makes its appeal. Beautiful buildings, beautiful furnishings, beautiful forms, and beautiful music, all contribute to the spiritual joy of communion with God.

Accordingly, Christian leaders should use their efforts to make the places where young folks meet for worship as attractive as possible. This need not require a large outlay of money. Beauty can be attained in simplicity as well as in costly complexity.

Young folks normally have a spirit of idealism. This is true even though there are many evidences to the contrary. Lack of idealism in youth is usually the consequence of lack of proper training or of the disillusioning lives of their elders. In spite of the exceptions, then, youth is an age of high ideals and a time of reaching out for the best. That best lies in the realm of the spiritual—in God. And it is in worship that he can best be reached.

Accordingly, Christian leaders should capitalize this characteristic of youth in the interest of worship. Then worship, in turn, can be capitalized in the interest of ever higher ideals and nobler Christian living.

Here, then, are five quite common traits of youth, and particularly of Christian youth. They can and should be utilized for the building of a life of worship—a life that is in vital union and in frequent communion with God.

### Study Activities

There are so many factors in the life of young folks that bear upon their study activities in the church, that it is impossible even to mention them here. Attention will, therefore, be focused only upon five of them: (1) young folks' ability to read; (2) their spirit of investigation; (3) their powers of reasoning; (4) their large variety of interests; (5) their many personal problems.

Young folks, even Intermediates, have usually developed their reading ability far beyond their ability in childhood. Consequently they understand and can generally use a much larger vocabulary than they could a few years earlier. Their fund of information, too, is much larger than it was when they were

Juniors. In fields in which they are interested, they usually do quite considerable reading. Of course, here as elsewhere, there are great differences due to intelligence, training, and opportunity.

Young folks, further, are usually interested in making investigations. They are curious about things and are eager for knowledge. Generally speaking, they have reached the end of the period where they will take things on authority; they want to investigate for themselves. Their public school training encourages this spirit of investigation and usually develops in them a scientific attitude. Accordingly, most young people today demand facts, and question anything which cannot be supported by observable facts.

Then, too, young folks have, normally, developed considerable power to reason. Not only do they demand facts, but they also demand sound reasons. Anything that does not appeal to them as being reasonable is likely to be questioned, no matter what other sanctions it may possess. When things which they have learned in childhood fail to meet the test of reason, young people quickly develop doubts, and occasionally these doubts are so many and so strong as to lead to a skeptical attitude toward almost everything. But this power to reason, in spite of the fact that it creates doubts, is a decided asset; for it is also the means by which youth can battle its way through problems and perplexities to greater and more fundamental certainties.

Youth, moreover, is a time of widely varying interests. Already in the Intermediate age young people's activities and interests begin to diversify. As they grow older, even greater differences of interest appear. Some continue their schooling; some go to work; some prepare to establish homes of their own, and actually do establish them. Thus, by the time persons come to the Young People's department they have a large variety of interests.

With developing life and increasing experiences, innumerable problems of deep personal significance arise. These problems are about life, work, money, sex, marriage, social standards, moral codes, church authority, religious practices, and so on. Young people want solutions to their problems—frank, honest solutions which will meet their needs.

Now, all these and many other characteristics of youth have a definite bearing upon the educational work of the church—upon the young people's study activities. Christian leaders who ear-

nestly desire to be of help to young folks need to know their common traits and what to do with them. Only a limited number of suggestions can here be given: (1) Try to meet youth's practical problems. Do not avoid the difficulties which young folks face. Be honest with them—and sympathetic. Christian leaders cannot hope to keep the respect and confidence of young people if they refuse to help them in their perplexities and troubles. (2) Keep in mind the diversified interests of your group. Try to give to each member something that will be of value to him. When teaching general truths, use illustrations from among the interests of your group members and, when it can be done without giving offense, suggest applications along the lines of their interests. It will be even more helpful if you can get the members themselves to offer examples and make applications. (3) Help young people to see the reasonableness of Christian faith. If they have doubts, encourage them to think them through until certainty is again attained. Avoid dogmatism. The foundations of the Christian faith are strong enough to require no dogmatic buttresses. (4) Let the members of your group investigate things for themselves. It is not wise for leaders to impart all the information. In public schools, even Junior High School boys and girls are sent out to make investigations of the political situation in their communities, of how public utilities operate, of what the community does in the way of charity and relief, and so forth. Surely, then, Intermediates, Seniors, and Young People can be asked to make their own investigations concerning such things as church organization, church finance, church worship, church institutions in the community, and church activities. (5) Make use of young people's reading ability. Let them read books on heroes of the church, church history, missionary adventures and achievements, and other topics in line with your program. Of course, the books must be attractive, interesting, attention-compelling, and they must be graded to the understanding of the group. In this way sessions can be greatly enriched. This sort of thing is done constantly in public schools; there is no reason why it cannot be done in church schools and societies.

As has been said, there are many other factors which influence young people and which should be taken into consideration in planning their study activities. It must suffice here to

add: Keep in mind the fundamental principles of learning; they are of basic importance. Leaders will do well to review Chapter IX.

### Fellowship Activities

It was stated under "Worship Activities" that youth is a social period and that young folks have an earnest desire for fellowship. What are some of the characteristics of youth which contribute to this emphasis on the social aspects of life? We shall select four: (1) young folks' spirit of devotion and loyalty; (2) their emotional hunger; (3) their interest in and attraction to persons of the opposite sex; (4) their intense joy in living.

In the first place, then, young folks normally possess a spirit of devotion and loyalty. It is an interesting fact that at a time when they are becoming increasingly independent they are also developing a greater devotion. Evidences of this may be seen in the developed school spirit in Junior and Senior High Schools, in the tendency of young folks to join clubs, in the faithfulness which many of them show in their church relationships, and in the many beautiful and enduring friendships which are formed during youth. Young people's devotion and loyalty are of such quality as often lead them to make great sacrifices for others, particularly for those to whom they are bound by bonds of personal attachment.

Accordingly, this is the time when the church should give particular attention to the social life of its young folks. It should see clearly the definite need for providing opportunities for young people to get together in happy social intercourse. Clubs, societies, parties, outings, recreational opportunities, summer camps, and the introduction of the fellowship note into every church meeting—all these will go far to give young folks the opportunities for fellowship which they crave. In so far as possible, the young folks themselves should be in charge of planning and carrying out their social programs. They should be trusted to the limit; it is remarkable how they will rise to the level of the confidence which is placed in them.

In the second place, young folks usually have an emotional hunger. This is no doubt partly due to the physical changes which are taking place within them. So great is this emotional hunger that it needs must be satisfied. If it is not satisfied on a

high Christian level, it will seek satisfaction on lower levels. Thus come emotional disturbances and excesses which lead to all sorts of difficult problems. The solution, of course, is the supply of emotional satisfaction on a high level: satisfying worship experiences; satisfying social fellowship; and satisfying æsthetic opportunities, such as group visits to art exhibits and group participation in plays, dramas, and pageants.

Accordingly, Christian leaders of young folks must make every effort to permeate the programs of their groups with satisfying emotional elements. Where these are wanting, it may be expected that the average young person will soon lose interest. Now, it is clearly recognized that Sunday school classes cannot be turned into social meetings; nor is this necessary. However, it is entirely possible to link more closely the various elements of a young people's program so that the young folks will realize that the total program is a unit and that all their needs are met by it. In other words, Sunday school teachers should co-operate with recreational and social leaders, and vice versa, until the whole program becomes a single, complete, and balanced program. Experiments are being made in various places with a view to organizing young people into a single church organization, instead of four or five as at present, in order that the young folks may realize that the whole of the church's program is a unit and that they may share in the whole of it to the full extent of their desire.

In the third place, young folks experience interest in and attraction to persons of the opposite sex. This general statement, however, needs qualification, for it does not apply very often to boys and girls of the Intermediate department. Indeed, quite frequently the opposite is true, that there is natural repulsion between the sexes during the earliest years of adolescence. The reason for this is not far to seek. Generally speaking, girls develop earlier and more rapidly than do boys. Consequently they seem to grow away from the boys with whom they have associated throughout childhood. This fact, in turn, creates misunderstandings and often leads to breaks in friendships of long standing. Accordingly, it sometimes becomes advisable to separate Intermediate boys and girls, at least during part of their activities. There is considerable difference of opinion on this point. But with the approach of middle adolescence, around the

fifteenth year, sex repulsions are normally replaced by sex attractions. The boys now find the new beauty of the girls attractive, and the girls are attracted by the splendid physique of the boys. It is natural for these young folks to seek each other's company and to enjoy fellowship together.

Christian leaders, accordingly, will do well to see that provision for meeting this need is made in the church's program. Wholesome opportunities will go far to eliminate from young people's lives the necessity of making opportunities of their own, often quite unwholesome in their nature.

And, in the fourth place, young folks usually are brim full of life, and relish to the full the joys of living. They want to have a good time and they are going to have it if there is any way of getting it. What is more, they should have it; it should be a part of their Christian experience. Not only should they find joy in fellowship; they should find it also in their worship, study, and service.

The church and its leadership, therefore, have a duty to make their program for young people as pleasant, satisfying, and joyous as is humanly possible.

### Service Activities

Just as young people have characteristics which lend themselves to worship, study, and fellowship, so they have others which make it possible for them to render worth-while service. These should be appealed to and utilized to the full.

For one thing, young folks generally take delight in doing things which really challenge their new powers. It is usually quite difficult to win them for tasks which are commonplace and of little real value; but, given tasks that call forth the best that is in them, they will almost always respond with consecration and courage. They are not afraid of big jobs; they normally detest little ones. One reason why the church has not secured the fuller co-operation of its young folks is because, all too frequently, it has been satisfied to ask them to engage in service activities which appeal to them as being trivial and inconsequential.

Again, youth is characterized by considerable initiative. It is not satisfied merely to follow the leadings of others; it is eager



to set out on ventures of its own. Such initiative should be encouraged. In it lies the hope of progress. Of course, there are dangers here, but these are not so dangerous as is the danger of developing men and women who, lacking initiative, accept life as it is without making any effort to improve it. Accordingly, Christian leaders will do well not only to set challenging tasks, but also to give many opportunities in which young people may discover needs and develop their own ways of meeting them.

Another factor in youth's make-up is its altruism, its willingness to give and to do for others. There is a widely prevalent quality of unselfishness among young people, and not infrequently it is truly astounding. Some of the finest sacrifices of which the world has known have been made by young folks. This spirit of altruism, of self-sacrifice, of selfless service can be won for Jesus Christ and his kingdom, provided the young people can be made to see that their sacrifices really have service value. Young people can be got to teach classes, to work in societies, to do social service work, to work for improved conditions in their community, to win others to Christ, if they can be got to see that these things actually do good.

Into its service activities youth is able to put a tremendous amount of physical and mental energy, at least after the Senior department is reached. During the Intermediate years much energy is needed for physical development and mental adjustment; but with the fifteenth year or thereabouts this energy is largely released for other tasks. It may be secured for Christian service projects as readily as for anything else. But, again, these projects must be interesting, large, worth while, calling for the best that youth has to give.

While childhood is the time when the fundamental lines of human development are laid down, youth is the period in which these lines are expanded, developed, and brought to the point of maturity. Its possibilities in worship, study, fellowship, and service, are almost limitless. So too, however, are its problems: for youth is a time of adjustment, of temptation, of decision, and of strain. Sympathy, understanding, tact, wisdom, and much patience are needed in guiding youth through these years of maturing life.

## WHAT TO DO

*My Observation Charts*

Have you completed your two charts? If not, are there items which you can now fill out? Study these two charts carefully. Are they of any practical value to you in your work? Would it be helpful to have similar charts for the other members of your class or group?

*Improving My Work with My Group*

Run through this chapter again and check all suggestions which you consider of practical value for your work with your own church group. Select one item which you believe valuable, practicable, and not too difficult of attainment. Plan to make use of it in your work at the very next opportunity. Then try another, and another, and another. Thus improvement will come.

## HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Brooks, F. D. *The Psychology of Adolescence*, 1929.  
Moxcey, M. E. *The Psychology of Middle Adolescence*, 1925.  
Mudge, E. L. *The Psychology of Early Adolescence*, 1922.  
Mudge, E. L. *The Psychology of Later Adolescence*, 1926.  
Rudisill, E. S. *The Intimate Problems of Youth*, 1929.  
Sadler, W. S. *Piloting Modern Youth*, 1931.  
Stewart, F. W. *A Study of Adolescent Development*, 1929.  
Stock, H. T. *Young People and Their Leaders*, 1933.

## CHAPTER XII

# OUR ADULTS

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THIS CHAPTER

This chapter endeavors to do for leaders of adults what the preceding chapters tried to do for leaders of children and of young folks. The material is again arranged under the same sub-heads. As you read this chapter, try to find answers to these questions:

1. What factors in adult life affect the worship of adults?
2. What adult traits need to be understood by leaders of adult study activities?
3. What are some adult characteristics which influence their fellowship activities?
4. What are some elements in adult life which make it possible for them to participate in Christian service activities?

A few general observations concerning adults may be of value by way of introduction to a more definite study of their worship, study, fellowship, and service characteristics. Adult life begins with physical maturity, usually shortly before the twenty-fifth year. For the next fifteen years or so, strength and vigor undergo little change unless health is impaired. At this time adults normally give themselves wholeheartedly to their homes, their occupations, or their careers. They seldom think about their strength, for it seems entirely sufficient.

Between the fortieth and fiftieth years, however—and somewhat earlier for women than for men—there comes a time when adults notice that they tire easily, that their tasks seem beyond their strength, that their work has become commonplace. They become restless and often long for they know not what. This change has a physical basis and is inevitable. There is some resemblance between this stage of life and the early adolescent period. It is a time of bodily adjustment. However, there should be little disturbance, unless the person approaches this period with fear, confusion, or an already tired and nervous body, in which case he is likely to be a problem to himself and to others. It is highly important, therefore, that adults understand the physical changes which are taking place. If this period is met intelligently and confidently, there is no reason why the rest of

life should not be perfectly healthy and happy. In fact, the following years may become the best and most worth-while years of life.

Some time after the fiftieth year—the time varies very greatly—the period of physical decline sets in. The amount and rate of decline differ with individuals, but there is usually some loss of physical power, which, in old age, may show itself in poor sight and hearing, in slowness of motion, in inability to throw off disease, and in many other ways. But even old age may be a time of health and strength and rich enjoyment of life.

The church has a responsibility toward these adults of all ages, just as it has toward children and young folks. If it is to fulfill it, its leaders will need to understand adults and adult life, particularly those characteristics which bear upon the major activities of the church. In the following pages, only the most common general aspects of adult life are treated, and even here there are numberless exceptions.

### Worship Activities

Worship is an integral part of Christian adult life. If rightly developed, it is a continuation, extension, and enrichment of the worship of youth. If wrongly developed in earlier life, it needs revision and perhaps even radical change. Now, what are some of the factors that affect adult worship?

In the first place, there is the tendency to continue established habits. This is an asset and a liability. If the habits are good, they are a blessing; if not, they may be a curse, for it is a very difficult thing to change them when once established. The worship of adults, then, is largely conditioned by earlier training and experience. Persons who for many years have found satisfaction in worship will probably continue the practice; those who have not will find it no easy task to develop it. Persons who have been regular in their church attendance during childhood and youth will most likely continue to go to church; those who have not are not likely to become regular attendants in adult years. Persons who have been trained in highly formal worship during their formative years will probably continue to enjoy such worship, while persons who have been brought up on informal worship will normally continue to find delight in it.

And so it goes. Habits have a way of persisting. This makes the work of Christian leaders very easy in the case of those persons who have established right habits of worship, and very hard in the case of those who have not. Even in this latter case, the situation is by no means hopeless; for there are other factors in adult life which are of assistance. Among these are the tendency to be dissatisfied with life as it is, the tendency to apply reason to life's problems, and the tendency to respond to strong emotions. All these are valuable for the development of worship activities among adults.

There is, then, in the second place, a tendency to be dissatisfied with life as it is. This is by no means a universal trait, for many—all too many—adults settle down and accept life as it is. Yet there are not a few who feel an inner conflict between what they are and what they know they ought to be. Here is the Christian leader's opportunity to show them that they can become what they ought to be if they will link their lives with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Not a few adults who had never known the satisfactions of worship in earlier life have found them during adult years through the very necessity of finding inner peace of soul. Christian leaders, then, can direct dissatisfied and distracted souls to God, with whom there is forgiveness and in whom there is peace.

In the third place, there is the tendency of adults to reason and to act upon it. If worship is presented in an intelligent, understandable way, many who now have inadequate, magical, and superstitious views of it can be led to participate in it with profit and joy. One reason why many adults fail to engage in worship, public and private, is that they have outgrown childish conceptions of it and have never been given more adequate ones. Consequently they have discarded worship as something that lacks vitality and reality. Christian leaders of adults need, therefore, to expand and enrich the very idea of worship and to demonstrate that worship is a reasonable, meaningful, real, and vital part of every life that is lived at its best.

And, as a last consideration, there is a tendency in adults to respond to strong emotions. There are evidences of this almost everywhere. Adults are sensitive to emotional appeals, perhaps not so much so as are children and young folks, but still considerably so. It is entirely possible, therefore, to get adults who

have not formed the habit of worshiping, to engage in worship, provided strong and appealing stimuli are used.

These practical suggestions, accordingly, are worthy of consideration by Christian leaders of adults: (1) Co-operate with leaders of children and young folks in establishing good habits of worship in early life; nothing else will so guarantee good worship habits in later years. (2) Direct men and women to worship as a means of resolving some of the inner conflicts of the soul. (3) Expand and enrich the idea of worship until it commends itself as a reasonable factor in life. (4) Make your discussions and your conduct of worship warm with emotional appeal, so that feelings may be aroused to the point where they will move men and women to seek fellowship with God.

A few additional suggestions may prove to be of value: Arrange worship services and meetings at times when adults can attend; special provision must often be made for persons who have to work at the usual hours of worship—hired help, motormen, conductors, physicians, nurses, and many others. Provide worship for shut-ins and shut-outs who, for one reason or another, cannot attend services at any time—the sick, the very aged, and others. Make special provision for persons who are handicapped by poor sight, hearing, and health; furnish them with every possible help—service books and hymnals with large type, acousticon equipment, cushioned pews, and the like. Supply adults with devotional literature for home use, or at least show them where they can secure it. Leaders of adults have a perfect right to bring such matters to the attention of the pastor and of the church council.

### Study Activities

Adult study activities, like everything else in adult life, are conditioned to no small degree by earlier training and experience. Grown-ups do not come to the classes and societies of the church without previous education. In many cases their minds have acquired a certain "set" which cannot be easily overcome. Further, their interests are perhaps even more varied than are those of young folks. This makes it difficult for leaders to plan courses of study which will be of interest to all the members of the group. Again, there is a widespread belief that adults are

too old to learn, and this produces a kind of mental inertia which resists genuine study. So leaders of adults are at the outset confronted by many difficulties and problems. These, however, are no more trying than are those of leaders of children and young people; they are merely somewhat different.

Over against these problems, which almost all leaders of adults face, are certain definitely compensating characteristics which make for effective teaching. Among these are: (1) the fact that practically all adults who attend study sessions do so voluntarily; (2) the fact that they have a wide range of experience and knowledge which may be utilized in work with them; (3) the fact that they have considerable power of logical thought; (4) the fact that they usually have ability to express themselves clearly. Of course, here again there are numberless exceptions. Adults, like children and young folks, show an almost limitless range of variation. Individual differences must always be taken into account, and adjustments made accordingly. With this fact, that there are wide variations, in mind, let us examine a bit more fully these characteristics of adults which help to make their study activities profitable and enjoyable.

In the first place, then, adults who attend study groups usually do so of their own free will. Consequently the leader normally has three advantages which leaders of younger groups cannot always count on: (1) He is not likely to be confronted by behavior problems. What a saving of time and energy this is! (2) He can usually count on his group's desire to learn; otherwise they would probably not be present at all. (3) He can usually count on some co-operation. This last statement will probably be challenged by leaders who have found it impossible to get adults to participate in discussions. It is an undeniable fact that many adults do not enter into group discussions held under church auspices. What is the reason for this? Why is it that these same adults will discuss politics, business, fashions, modern trends, and even religious questions in other groups and will not do so in classes and societies of the church? There are, no doubt, many reasons. A few—and these should be thoroughly pondered by leaders of adults—are given here: (1) Our adults have been trained to listen in church, not to speak; the discussion idea in church work is a comparatively recent development. (2) Our adults have to no little degree been cowed by the

authoritative and dogmatic methods by which all too frequently the church's teaching has been done; there has been little room for discussion. (3) Our adults have, therefore, hesitated to express themselves for fear of being considered doubters and heretics; those who have disagreed with their leaders have usually preferred to withdraw from the group, rather than to take issue with what has been dogmatically presented. (4) Many of the topics of study have been remote from the life and interests of our adults or couched in unfamiliar terminology; accordingly they have been unable to discuss them. But where the issues of life have been treated in a practical and understandable way, where teaching has been sympathetic, where freedom of expression has been encouraged and questions have not been looked upon as signs of unbelief, and where a spirit of give-and-take has prevailed, there our adults have usually been willing and eager to co-operate in study activities.

In the second place, adults usually bring with them a wide variety of experience and knowledge. Even a single individual, by the time he reaches adulthood, has accumulated a vast fund of valuable information. A group of such individuals has, normally, an almost limitless treasure of stored-up experience and knowledge. All this is very valuable to the leader who has ability to draw it out and to utilize it for the group's benefit.

In the third place, adults normally have considerable power of logical thought. The degree to which it has been developed depends, again, on native intelligence, earlier training, and past experience. This ability of adults to think is a tremendous help to teachers and other leaders of adult study groups. For example, whereas in children's work it is often necessary to give numerous examples before the children understand a truth, in adult work a single illustration may suffice, and often even this is not necessary; or, while in earlier years many concrete applications must be made if a teaching is to be carried over into life, in adulthood persons are often able to think out their own applications. Accordingly, in adult groups it is possible to cover much more ground than would be possible in other groups in the same amount of time.

In the fourth place, adults usually have the ability to express themselves quite clearly. What a help this is! Contrast the worker with children, who spends so much time trying to under-



stand what a child is trying to say. What an adult says may be entirely wrong, but it will probably be clearly stated.

Here, to summarize, are a few adult characteristics which are of distinct value in the conduct of the study activities of grown-ups: their willingness and desire to learn, their general spirit of co-operation if given a chance, their rich treasures of knowledge and experience, their ability to think, and their ability to express themselves clearly. Even though adults are often handicapped by fixed habits and mind-sets acquired in childhood and youth, and even though many of them have a feeling that they are too old to learn, yet, with the help of these other characteristic qualities, much can be accomplished.

In conclusion, let it be said that adults learn in exactly the same way as do children and young folks; the principles of learning, set forth in Chapter IX, are fundamental principles throughout life. Leaders will do well to keep them in mind.

### Fellowship Activities

Human beings are by nature social creatures. Fellowship with others is an almost absolutely essential element of human life; without it life would be well-nigh meaningless. We have already seen that social tendencies develop in childhood and that they reach their height in youth. But they do not stop there. Adult life needs fellowship as truly as does any other period of man's being. This is evident from the fact that adults are constantly seeking social contacts through visits, clubs, parties, group meetings, and the like. The church, if it is wise, will make provisions for fellowship in its program for adults. To be sure, church services offer such an opportunity. Here its members find fellowship not only with God, but also with one another—and this fellowship is the highest which the church can provide. However, there is need for fellowship also along other lines.

Making provision for adult social life is by no means an easy task. There are several facts about adult life which make it quite difficult to furnish satisfying social experiences.

In the first place, adults vary greatly in their social interests. Some find pleasure in physical forms of social activity: games, sports, hikes; others are given to mental social pursuits: discussions, debates, musicales. Some like noise and hilarity; others

want quiet and dignified group meetings. Some prefer to have entertainment supplied for them; others enjoy nothing so much as making their own entertainment. Some will associate only with persons of their own social standing; others are very democratic and enjoy mixing with all sorts and conditions of people. It stands to reason, then, that there are difficulties involved in supplying a program of fellowship for persons of such widely varied interests.

In the second place, adults vary greatly in social ability. Some find social meetings very exhausting and wearing; others seem to be able to go on almost endlessly without tiring. Some are very timid and retiring; others are super-social and even forward. Some make friends easily and naturally; for others the making of friends is a quite painful experience. Some are embarrassed when asked to take even some insignificant part; others are unhappy unless they can run the whole program. The list of contrasting types could be extended almost without end. Here again it can readily be seen that providing for fellowship for such diversified types is no easy problem. Human nature is too complex to be cast into any single mold.

What is the solution? The following suggestions are offered: (1) Considerable variety is needed in fellowship programs intended for adults. The best results are attained when there is good balance between physical and mental features, between wholesome fun and more serious pastime, between planned entertainment and impromptu numbers. (2) The group itself, unless it is very large and unwieldy, should be allowed to initiate programs of its own and to carry them out. Change in the personnel of committees is often helpful. (3) Everyone should be asked to participate, but persons who do not care to do so should not be forced into activities in which they find no satisfaction or which tend to embarrass them. (4) Care should be taken, especially in fellowship programs prepared for older adults, that the activities do not require too great expenditure of physical, mental, or emotional energy. (5) Every fellowship meeting should be permeated by a fine Christian spirit. The fellowship patterns of the world are not models for the church of Jesus Christ.

In closing this very brief discussion of adult fellowship, a word should be said concerning those who cannot attend group meet-

ings. These unfortunates need Christian social life even more than do others. It should be specially provided for them. How much joy can be brought to invalids and old folks, for example, by church visitors, by altar-flower committees, by choir members, and by others, who will take the time to call, read, sing, and otherwise carry a bit of cheer to these who are excluded by circumstances from the general fellowship of the church!

### Service Activities

Adulthood is supremely the time of service. The years of preparation have practically come to an end; the great majority of adults have entered upon their life work; their daily service habits have largely been established. They are now engaged in making their contribution to the work of the world. Their occupations vary; their motives which impel them to work vary; their attitudes toward their work vary. The service which each renders is conditioned by circumstances, training in childhood and youth, experience, and choice. For many their work is a thrilling adventure and joy; for many it is an indifferent routine; for many it is a drudgery and a grind.

In this daily work of its members the church should take no little interest. It can do much to be of genuine help. For one thing, the church can help its adults to see that all work, even the most commonplace, should grow out of a sense of stewardship; that it should be motivated by love for God and man; that it can be made real service to God and man; and that all such service is truly Christian service. Further, the church can help its adults to employ Christian standards and to follow Christian ideals in all their work. If Christian leaders of adults can accomplish this, they will be doing more for people, the church, the world, and God, than if they succeed in getting a few individuals here and there to engage in some particular church activities of service. In other words, to help a mother see that the Christian rearing of her family is Christian service, to help the business man see that the Christian conduct of his business is Christian service, and so forth—this is of more value than the winning of an hour's work a week for a sewing circle or a church council.

However, the specific service activities of the church are also highly important, and it is a part of the Christian leader's task

to interest adults in them and to secure their co-operation and support. There are several elements in adult life which make it possible for adults to participate actively in church work. In the first place, many grown-ups find pleasure in doing some work that is out of their regular line of daily work; they find such additional work to be recreation—purposeful and profitable recreation. There is no adequate reason why this extra work should not be done in the church. But, if they are to participate with enthusiasm, the work given them must be purposeful and profitable; to work merely for the sake of working is not appealing to mature minds. Therefore, service projects in the church must be service projects and not merely activity projects. In the second place, many adults have developed particular talents and skills suited to particular kinds of work. Practically all such skills are of value somewhere in the work of the church. If adults are to be enlisted in service in the church, these talents and skills must be made use of. A person who has teaching ability should be given an opportunity to teach; a person with a good voice should be encouraged to join the choir; a person with administrative ability should be given an administrative position. The nature of each individual should be considered. In the third place, while most adults have considerable energy—this is particularly true of younger adults—it should be remembered that most of them are very busy people and that the church has no right to overtax them. A reasonable amount of church work should be expected from every member of the church; but it is a mistake to ask more than this. In not a few congregations a small number of persons are called on to do almost everything, simply because they are consecrated souls who are willing to work whenever and wherever asked. It would be much better to develop a large number of workers and to distribute the work load among them. If this is to be done, the beginning must be made in childhood and youth.

Adults, then, have energy and ability for church work, and many of them delight in doing it. They should be given opportunities to engage in service activities which interest them, for which they have skill, and which is within the scope of their energy. Leaders of adults should plan with their groups definite projects in which all can engage, and care should be taken that

duplications and over-lappings are avoided — there should be close co-operation between all church groups.

A word in conclusion: Adults need a well-rounded, balanced, full, and rich church life. They need opportunities for physical recreation, mental stimulation, emotional expression, social contacts, spiritual renewal. Christian leaders of the church can help to furnish these through a planned program in which worship, study, fellowship, and service have each its proper and proportioned place.

### WHAT TO DO

#### *My Observation Charts*

Have you completed your two charts? If not, are there items which you can now fill out? Study these two charts carefully. Are they of any practical value to you in your work? Would it be helpful to have similar charts for the other members of your class group?

#### *Improving My Work with My Group*

Run through this chapter again and check all suggestions which you consider of practical value for your work with your own church group. Select *one* item which you believe valuable, practicable, and not too difficult of attainment. Plan to make use of it in your work at the very next opportunity. Then try another, and another, and another. Thus improvement will come.

### HELPFUL BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Darsie, C. *Adult Religious Teaching*, 1930.

Gilkey, J. G. *Managing One's Self*, 1932.

Jackson, J. A. and Salisbury, H. M. *Outwitting Our Nerves*, 1932.

Overstreet, H. A. *About Ourselves*, 1927.

Soares, T. G. *A Study of Adult Life*, 1923.

Zeigler, E. F. *Toward Understanding Adults*, 1931.

# APPENDIX

## OBSERVATION CHART

(A guide for studying members of church groups)

### I. ITEMS RELATED TO INHERITANCE AND HOME

- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. NAME:                                       | 2. ADDRESS:        |
| 3. DATE OF BIRTH:                              | 4. PLACE OF BIRTH: |
| 5. NAME OF FATHER:                             | 6. OF MOTHER:      |
| 7. NATIONALITY OF FATHER:                      | 8. OF MOTHER:      |
| 9. OCCUPATION OF FATHER:                       | 10. OF MOTHER:     |
| 11. BROTHERS AND SISTERS:                      |                    |
| 12. NATURE OF HOME SURROUNDINGS AND HOME LIFE: |                    |
| 13. INHERITED FACTORS AND TENDENCIES:          |                    |
| 14. SPECIAL ABILITIES:                         |                    |

## II. ITEMS RELATED TO PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

15. HEIGHT (UNDER AVERAGE, AVERAGE, OVER AVERAGE):
16. WEIGHT (UNDER AVERAGE, AVERAGE, OVER AVERAGE):
17. GENERAL HEALTH:
18. HEALTH HABITS:
19. SPECIFIC HEALTH PROBLEMS REQUIRING ATTENTION:

## III. ITEMS RELATED TO EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

20. GENERAL EMOTIONAL NATURE:
21. GENERAL EMOTIONAL CONTROL:
22. PARTICULARLY VALUABLE EMOTIONAL QUALITIES:
23. PARTICULARLY HARMFUL EMOTIONAL QUALITIES:
24. SPECIFIC EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS REQUIRING ATTENTION:

## IV. ITEMS RELATED TO MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

25. GENERAL INTELLIGENCE (SUBNORMAL, NORMAL, SUPERNORMAL):
26. PUBLIC (OR PRIVATE) SCHOOL GRADE:
27. GENERAL STUDY HABITS:
28. FIELDS OF SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE:
29. FAVORITE BOOKS AND MAGAZINES:
30. PARTICULAR MENTAL ABILITIES:
  - (1) MEMORY\*:
  - (2) REASON\*:
  - (3) IMAGINATION\*:
  - (4) VOCABULARY\*:
31. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGIOUS MATTERS:
  - (1) OF THE BIBLE\*:
  - (2) OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH\*:
  - (3) OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH\*:
  - (4) OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE\*:
32. SPECIFIC MENTAL PROBLEMS REQUIRING ATTENTION:

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\* Mark these items: excellent, good, fair, poor, very poor.



## V. ITEMS RELATED TO SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- |                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 33. BAPTIZED:                     | 34. CONFIRMED: |
| 35. CHURCH AFFILIATION OF FATHER: | 36. OF MOTHER: |
| 37. CHURCH ACTIVITY OF FATHER:    | 38. OF MOTHER: |
39. NATURE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IN FAMILY:
40. PERSON'S OWN PARTICIPATION IN LIFE OF CHURCH:
- (1) IN CHURCH SERVICES:
  - (2) IN CHURCH SCHOOLS:
  - (3) IN CHURCH SOCIETIES:
41. PERSON'S OWN SPIRITUAL LIFE:
- (1) BIBLE READING:
  - (2) PRAYER:
  - (3) CHRISTIAN CHARACTER:
42. SPECIFIC SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS REQUIRING ATTENTION:

## VI. ITEMS RELATED TO IDEALS

- 43. PERSON'S IDEALS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE:
- 44. IDEALS OUT OF HARMONY WITH THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:
- 45. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS DUE TO LACK OF, OR UNCHRISTIAN, IDEALS:

## VII. ITEMS RELATED TO ACTIVITIES

- 46. HELPFUL ACTIVITIES IN WHICH PERSON ENGAGES:
- 47. HARMFUL ACTIVITIES IN WHICH PERSON ENGAGES:
- 48. DESIRABLE ACTIVITIES IN WHICH PERSON FAILS TO ENGAGE:
- 49. SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS NOT ELSEWHERE LISTED:







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